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THE
MISCELLANEOUS
COMPANIONS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



T H E
MISCELLANEOUS
COMPANIONS:

V O L. III.

CONTAINING
DISSERTATIONS ON PARTICULAR
SUBJECTS AND OCCASIONS;
A N D
DIALOGUES IN THE WORLD OF
SPIRITS.

B Y
WILLIAM MATTHEWS.

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MISCELLANEOUS

COMPANIONS



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DISSERTA-



DISSERTATION
ON THE
PARTICULAR SUBJECT
OF
MARRIAGE.

MARRIAGE IS HONOURABLE IN ALL;—BUT WHORE-
MONGERS AND ADULTERERS GOD WILL JUDGE.

Heb. xiii. 4.

HERE doth not seem to be a subject
T in the whole compass of human af-
fairs, on which depends so much of
human happiness, both in civil and domestick
life, as on the right understanding and use of
marriage. It is an institution of divine autho-
rity, and to which the serious attention of ra-
tional beings is most largely called.

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B

Our

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Our present reflections on the subject are, however, addressed principally to that numerous body of mankind, which claims the distinction of *christian* believers; who, it is presumed, are, in some sense or other, the greater part of the inhabitants of this country, as well as many other countries of the globe.

Christianity, although in some respects diversely represented, taketh cognizance of this institution, as a most important subject of regulation in human life.

Human nature may be, and most likely is, much the same, in all ages and all nations; and one of the strongest features, if not the very strongest in the human character, is that of the mutual attachment of the sexes. A mutual attachment of this kind, indeed, more or less strong, pervades all the ranks of animal existence; and it is one of the most curious observations in natural philosophy, that it presents its various appearances in the vegetable world also.

It may likewise be remarked, as relative to the subject, and its divine adaption to an orderly
method

method of replenishing the earth, that this attachment is a mean of creation, and of perpetuating much good upon the whole; a bond of union and pleasure, which, as proceeding from an infinitely wise Creator and gracious Governor, must be the best calculated to promote the highest degree of social happiness, of any that could have been devised.

But there is a wide distinction between that which is right in the gratification of this attachment among men, and that gratification which may be, and undoubtedly is, consistent with order, among inferior beings. This distinction may be called an obvious one, and considered by some of my readers as unnecessarily made in this place. But so long as human passion, licentiousness, and wantonness, continue, so much as they now do, to debase the human character, and sink it in sensuality nearly to the level of the beasts that perish, so long will it be necessary to warn mankind against those licentious indulgences, by which they depart from the privileged dignity of their being, and mingle in shame and corruption!

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The institution of marriage, as undoubtedly intended to be at once subservient to the orderly propagation of the species, the most happy society, and the most endearing confidence, is a law on humanity, which requires a studious, religious, and most refined obedience. Perhaps not an obedience as to an universal obligation on all men to marry: that, certainly, in the general order of the christian religion, cannot be a part; for while every individual of the species is not naturally or morally capable of sustaining the wedded character, either with good to themselves, or a good with reference to the whole of their fellow beings; it may be, and sometimes is, a superior advantage in both respects, for some to remain unconnected in that relation.

The superior call of religion, to the discharge of particular religious and relative duties, for the good of others, is a call which may be sometimes wisely and mercifully impressed upon the minds of individuals, by Him who, as Lord of the heart, communicates counsel, the most fit for every the minutest purpose of his moral government: by Him who not only governs the whole

whole creation by the orderly laws of righteousness and truth; but without a belief in whose particular providence, it is presumed the highest happiness cannot be conferred. And to persons whose minds are so circumstanced, their refraining from marriage may be as much a part of good order and duty, as the general call is, to the general discharge of duties in the married state.

Some there undoubtedly are, who from natural constitution (in which the degree of tendency to union may vary so much, that no two persons may be exactly alike) have small inclination in themselves towards an intercourse with the other sex. This consciousness may rightly operate upon, and determine their choice, to remain single: and in that single state, they may have duties, very important to the general welfare of society, to discharge.

Their talents for the acquisition and diffusion of useful knowledge, may have a more ample and useful scope: their activity in aiding plans of publick usefulness may be the more effectual, and the success attendant on their

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exertions in their private affairs, may become a source of ability to help others, under the various difficulties and maladies to which human nature is incident. These persons, therefore, so employed, may be filling up their proper stations in society, and may, equally with the married, be found in the ranks of the "honourable."

But mankind should consider this as a truth which concerns them, that a penurious, unsympathizing, or indolent course of mere existence, however strictly chaste, can admit of no counter-balance, even in the sight of heaven, for a voluntary exemption from the general cares of a married life: it should also be considered, that persons of such a description will have small right to complain of the unamiable light, in which they will not fail to be considered, by the more affectionate and liberal part of their fellow beings. Such, either in themselves or from their station, can have no pretensions to the distinction of "honourable."

But we will return with pleasure to the *general* scripture principle, that "marriage is
"honourable."

“honourable.” It is really with pleasure that I return to it, and with assurance also that I shall be joined in the fullest approbation, by the greater part of my *fair readers*, to whom I would gladly address as pleasing a doctrine as may be consistent with truth and propriety.

That *marriage* is in itself *honourable*, we will gladly believe, for sundry reasons, beside the pleasure which our nature is so generally prone to expect from it: as, *first*, because the Creator of all things, the original, infinitely wise, and good Legislator, was pleased to institute it, and sanction it by his blessing, in the earlier and more simple ages of the world, in which the offspring of marriage was considered as the first and distinguishing kind of the riches of human life. Such an offspring were the blessings of pious and honourable women—the blessings of patriarchs and good men—even blessings by which the promises of rewards were made, and the benefits of the true church were set forth. Thus Abraham had the promise of having his name perpetuated in a numerous posterity, *more than the stars of heaven for multitude*. And again
in

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in Psalms : *Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord : and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*

Secondly ; Because our Blessed SAVIOUR himself, who was the pattern of all purity, and his sanction the infallible sanction of heaven, was pleased to honour a marriage solemnity with his presence, in Cana of Galilee ; and to chuse that publick occasion for working a miracle, as well to contribute to the pleasure of the festival, as to shew his miraculous power. And again, the vision of the new Jerusalem, seen and described by the inspired apostle in the Revelations, is set forth in a beautiful manner, by the figure of a *bride* : “ I saw the holy city, new “ Jerusalem, descending down from God out “ of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for “ her husband.”

And, *finally* ; The glorious consummation of the gospel covenant, and the beatifick union of the church with her head and “ high-priest for “ ever,” is in the same book set forth by the figure of a *marriage*—in which description the church triumphant in heaven is made to exclaim in strains of thanksgiving and praise :
“ Let

“ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour
 “ unto GOD, for the *marriage* of the Lamb is
 “ come, and the *bride* hath made herself ready.”

Thus much for the divinity of the institution, and the incontestible and beautiful sanction of *marriage*!

It remains now, for us closely to consider the important subject, with regard to those who, from natural disposition and other circumstances, are desirous of entering into that state; or who feel themselves naturally desirous of that kind of intercourse, which is the common propensity of human nature.

Most rational beings are so constituted by the goodness of their Creator, that (notwithstanding their liability to err, and their proneness to fall into the practice of error) they would not, of premeditated and voluntary choice, break through the order of virtue, and wantonly do violence to the laws of righteousness. The failings and sins of mankind are gradual, and acquire strength and malignity from evil example,

ple, and slow beginnings of unfaithfulness to convictions of right and wrong.

Independently of the too common doctrines of illicit intercourse, between the sexes in barbarous nations, (which indeed are common favourite allegations of the confirmed licentious, hardened, and wicked) most men are persuaded in their own minds, that the precepts against whoredom, fornication, and adultery, are rightly and divinely founded.

I presume, therefore, that it will not be necessary here, to adduce arguments, to satisfy any reasonable man, that under the laws of righteousness, he is not at liberty to seek any sensual gratification, of the kind to which we allude, but in the sanctioned and "honourable" state of "marriage." And if he be so convinced in himself, his acting, or even willing to act, contrarily to such a conviction, must consequently render him obnoxious to that memorable scripture declaration: "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

To

To plead the impetuosity of passion, and the strength of natural propensity, in extenuation of their licentious offences, were unreasonable and impious: such a kind of argument might, by the same rule of reasoning, be brought to excuse pride, covetousness, envy, malice—the habits of luxury, drunkenness, and all the other enormities, which disorder society, and deform the face of the marvellous creation of God!

To the important and honourable state of *marriage*, to the peculiarity of its allowable intercourse, would I wish to fix the attention, and the regulated desire, of the warmly-affectioned, who are yet willing to be virtuous.

And as inducements to such a restricted, yet sufficiently extensive, indulgence of natural attachment and desire, as in the case of every other species of orderly and virtuous conduct, we have arguments the most strong and rational, as well as most abundant, in store. The necessary limits, indeed, of our design in this place, will not allow us to cite *many* arguments; but by that divine assistance, which accompanies the works of good-will, we shall endeavour
to

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to place and consider some of them in their proper light.

The great general principle on which we will proceed, is this most simple and undeniable one:—That happiness is the object which all men have immediately or remotely in view, from what they engage in. No man deviseth a scheme, in whatsoever state of mind or desire he findeth himself, without proposing in his mind some kind and degree of *happiness*, as the event of it. There is no man who would not willingly be accounted a wise man rather than a fool: no reasonable man, who would not rather, on reflection, be able to consider himself as having acted wisely than foolishly. It is then the greatest wisdom for any man to endeavour so to act, as that on reflection he may be easy and satisfied with himself. For though the action, or passion, or gratification of a moment, may be pleasant to his sense in the absence of reflection; yet, as reflection *will* come, which may far exceed in duration the moment of indulgence; and that long reflection may be attended with a poignancy of pain, it becomes a man who would be esteemed, or have any
just

just pretence for esteeming himself, wife, so strictly to forego the improper momentary indulgence, as that he may escape the life-time of pain. If he acts otherwise, he will act as a fool, and must ever afterwards have to consider himself in no better light.

Or if he should hastily forget his improper conduct, it will be at best but an argument of his weakness or depravity: from the former of which he can hope for no final advantage, while from the latter the disadvantage is great and certain. Add to this, that one forbidden and injurious gratification naturally strengthens the appetite for more, not only of the same kind, but of other kinds, and lays open the heart for the unconquerable depredations of vice, and a general corruption of principle.

In short, such a man, beside the evil example which he exhibits to mankind around him, (who, notwithstanding a fancied secrecy in the commission of his crimes, will at length, and perhaps soon, learn to consider him as a vicious character) renders himself perpetually and completely unhappy.

So

So much with regard to *himself*: and next with regard to his *accomplice* in lewdness:—

If he first seduce her himself, he will do her an injury, which, in any altered state of his mind, in future, he can never be able to repair. Infinite mercy, by regarding her in a state of future penitence and contrition, may hold her pardoned and accepted, and may even establish her in the consciousness of chastity of mind, and the sufficiency of atonement for that which is past.

But in proportion to that alteration, will often be the keenness of regret, that she should ever have been seduced from the path of virtue. She may remember her seducer with forgiveness and pity; but never without pain. The only plausible pretence of an adequate *recompence*, is *marriage*, if circumstances admit of it; but even such a marriage, so little intitled to the scripture meaning of “honourable,” will not be a complete and satisfactory reparation of the preceding folly.

Neither

Neither can any man warrantably plead in his favour, that his sensual commerce was indulged among women previously dishonoured, and become common prostitutes.

It must be a poor and unworthy reflection for a man of sense to amuse himself with, that he had so little delicacy as to seek a secret gratification, from an intercourse with one, who regarded him only for his money and his lewdness, and who the next hour would receive into her arms any dull, unsentimental, or vulgar person, who should happen to make his advances to her, or rather would impudently seek the embraces of such a person, from the same needy and voluptuous motives which led her to receive his.

A man of reflection and sensibility having so acted, must feel in himself a conscious shame on the recollection of his conduct, when in the company of women of real delicacy, and who are actuated by the chaste and virtuous principles of love: he must consider himself as unworthy of an association with them; and should he wish to make serious proposals of marriage
to

to one of this amiable class, he must be conscious of his great unworthiness, on account of hidden irregularities, which he would be both ashamed and afraid to have her know of: irregularities which she had an equal right to allow herself a gratification in, and to conceal from a husband; but which, should he afterwards find she had been guilty of, would not fail to render her disagreeable in his sight, and the object of his disgust, if not abhorrence, in proportion to the secrecy of her intrigues, and the hypocrisy of her heart.

But with regard to commerce with common prostitutes; it must be allowed, that promiscuous prostitution is an evil in itself, because obviously destructive of every thing chaste, amiable, and delicate, in the female mind: a vice tending to mental depravity and bodily corruption; and the sure source of unhappiness and misery.

Every man, who, by his illicit practice, encourages prostitution in women, is the enemy of their peace and happiness, so far forth as he is connected with them.

Though

Though it were possible for a man so to conduct a course of intrigue, and illicit sensual intercourse, as that no human being but the female party or parties concerned may be acquainted therewith, yet is it to be remembered, that the highest offence, and the most daring insult, is that done against the revealed purity of the laws of *heaven*: which laws positively prohibit every thing that is opposite to order, honour, integrity, and virtue; and call for every thing that is sober, regular, sincere, and “honourable.” They call individually on human beings, for their utmost endeavours to promote the cause of righteousness in publick and private life—in our own minds, and in the minds of our fellow beings.

Therefore the man who promotes disorder and vice, in the mind of another person, increases that person’s unhappiness: and the man who is the instrument of further and further vitiating, and disqualifying an immortal being for immortal happiness, when the only alternative is happiness or misery in a future world, is, properly considered, a monster of iniquity, and has many moments of sorrow to pass

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through; many moments of inward condemnation, shame, and confusion of face; without a *claim* of alleviation, from the mercy of God, whose laws he so presumptuously and wantonly violates.

Now it is an obvious truth, that there is no transgression against the appointed order of heaven, no irregularity in the human character, attended with such strong marks of *change* and *degeneracy*, as *prostitution* among women. The delicate features, and amiable cast of countenance, peculiar to the female face, soon become changed into the most speaking indications of indelicacy and wantonness. The innocent sprightliness, ingenuity, tenderness, modesty, grace, which are so powerfully adapted to enliven, delight, ornament, and sweeten society—qualities which we may well suppose to form a conspicuous part of the character of angels—lose, from this source of corruption, all their genuine tinctures; and in the room of them leave us nothing better than a kind of guilty indolence, coarseness of wit, frequently an impenetrable hardness of heart, and a vulgarity of face, gesture, and manners, that shock
our

our best feelings; that excite within us a continual lamentation, for the untimely blasting and ruin of the first beauties and excellencies of nature!

The man who cannot feel the force of such reflections as these, has certainly much reason to think that his mind is in a great degree naturally insensible; or (which he has greater reason to fear) habitually contaminated with evil, to an alarming stage of depravity!

The man who can feel, and the young man especially who doth feel these truths, and assent in his judgment to the verity and propriety of these doctrines, has upon him an indisputable weight of obligation to avoid, as much as he can, every *temptation* to the evil now treating of: not only to shudder at the first idea of seducing the innocent, but also at the idea of being instrumental in augmenting the guilt of the guilty.

It may further be considered as an argument, positively binding on them who would be offended at the imputation of one of the greatest

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acts of *cruelty* to their fellow beings, that they cannot allow themselves the indulgence of such sensuality, without being *cruel* in the extreme. Some poor inconsiderate women themselves may possibly be found, abandoned enough not to consider prostitution as tending to their own *distress*, till that distress really comes upon them. But if, as every reasonable man must allow, common prostitution has a direct tendency to corrupt as well the body as the mind—to render wretched by corporeal disease, as well as to fill the conscience with guilt, and horror, and desperation; it must be nothing short of *cruelty* in any man, not lost to all sympathy for the sufferings of others, to be at all instrumental in producing so much calamity.

It may not, indeed, always happen, from illicit personal commerce, that a consequence so full of misery may be brought on a poor unhappy woman; but as every quantity of soil thrown into a stream of fair water tends to stain it and augment its impurity, so every degree of promiscuous intercourse has its proportionate and positive effect, towards the event of a final and irremediable corruption: an event which

which hath often been connected with a languishing and miserable death!

We will not, here, so fully dwell on the danger and disadvantage that a man, by such a course, subjects *himself* to, because if he deliberately chuses to run the risque of present and lasting affliction, to himself, rather than not gratify a depraved appetite, it becomes a question, not of *cruelty* to himself, but of his own chosen presumption and egregious folly.

But if all generous sentiments of social kindness and concern for the ease of others, or the preventing of misery from coming upon a present, and an innocent succeeding generation, be unworthy of attention, when the indulgence of a natural passion stands in the way; if good is not to be done, or one of the most deplorable calamities not to be prevented, where a sacrifice of our own sensuality alone is to be made, as the condition; then away with every rational and beautiful distinction; every virtuous conclusion of *Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca*: consign them at once to oblivion. Let the Twelve Apostles be reckoned as twelve foolish

pretenders to inspiration, and imposers on the better sense of mankind: yea, let the Teacher himself of those trifling doctrines which were taught upon the Mount of Olives, be ridiculed as a dull and visionary enthusiast! Let such wiser and more authorised persons attend at the foot of *his* cross, who lived a life of immaculate purity, for the purpose of instruction and admonition; and who died for the reformation of men's manners; and there, in the perversion of the powers of their minds, let them ridicule Him, with more than jewishi, with more than heathen, mockery! And lastly, let such giants of triumphant human nature wander through the earth, in search of society with such as (in the description of ancient poets) are said to have corporeally assaulted even heaven itself!

But to say no more, in the stile of censure, on that defection and depravity of mind, which I hope all my readers will be prepared to reject and condemn; I shall now close this dissertation with a few remarks, which may tend to regulate the judgment and the heart, in the important business of entering into that state of "marriage" which is said, as a general truth,
to

to be "honourable in all." To do which the better, a few strictures on the common frailties of some young candidates for *marriage* may be useful.

I. A part of the happiness frequently proposed in *marriage* by several classes of people, is made to consist in beginning that period of life in a more liberal stile of accommodation, and an increase of splendor.

II. This view is too often pursued into practice, without considering, not only how far it is practicable in its support, but how far it is a rational good.

Such candidates for *marriage*, however strongly attached to the objects of their choice, have not sufficiently availed themselves of those lights of their rational nature—of the best principles of civil society—and especially of the divine doctrines respecting the principles of happiness, to be fully prepared for enjoying, with the *endearments*, the *advantages* of *honourable marriage*.

Others

Others there are, among the laborious and more dependant classes, who are prone to enter into the marriage-connexion, from the influence of undisciplined passion, without considering,

1st. The probable means of their future support, or whether they have any, from the best resources, *i. e.* their own industry and frugality.

2^{dly}. Without having proposed to themselves a part in that rational and sentimental union, which may be fitly termed the marriage or union of the mind; and without a view to which, in reasonable beings, no marriage can, in the strict sense of the term, be "honourable."

But the failings, and imprudence of one part of mankind, should be warnings to others: and in such a momentous concern as that of *marriage*, too much regard cannot be had to the motives which give rise to a desire of conjugal union; and till parties of either sex are fully convinced that they desire that union on solid and refined principles of affection, and have acquired resolutions to engage, as much as possible,

possible, on a plan of industry, frugality, and simplicity of manners; from the whole of which, much happiness may be expected; they may fairly conclude that they are not the proper subjects of *marriage*; and such a conclusion, while it may guard them from a hasty and unwarrantable engagement, in a state for which they are not prepared, may most powerfully operate, at an important period of life, towards that reformation which is necessary to make them happy in any station whatever. When such a reformation shall have been made, and the mind thereby have acquired a virtuous complexion, then, not only the desire of *marriage* becomes *honourable*, but hope and confidence may be indulged, that under the divine blessing (which is ever attendant on virtuous views) the marriage state may be entered into with an advantage and comfort, far superior to the general solicitude of a single life, however chaste and guarded such a life may have been. Some solitudes of the tender and domestick kind, peculiar to the conjugal connexion, must be expected; but where strength of affection prevails, and the tenderneſſes of an infant offspring are worthily held as a counter-
balance

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balance for the lesser cares of that single state, for which the bulk of mankind was never designed; the advantage, on the score of happiness in this world, and a well-grounded hope of it in a future one, will generally be found great, solid, permanent, and "honourable."

CON

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

L A S T D A Y.

IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MAN ONCE TO DIE, BUT AFTER
THAT THE JUDGMENT. Heb. ix. 27.

THIS is a theme which may well be considered as one of the most interesting that can be addressed to human contemplation. It is a theme on which hath been built a great part of the happiness or misery of the religious part of mankind. We have, in the Holy Scriptures, many similitudes whereby it is likened to various things; many unequivocal assurances of its reality; positive prophecies of the signs of the times when it shall draw nigh; some direct references to it, and many (perhaps mostly allegorical) descriptions of it; and from these

these have been drawn, both in the pulpit, and in books of divinity, doctrines without number; as well as warnings and admonitions, frequently with very little consideration or benefit.

From the general tenor and tendency of those doctrines, we are much interested to consider, how far general and popular opinion may stand sanctioned or refuted, after close examination, by that reason which is one chief privilege and glory of human nature. And so long as we enquire and reflect with reverence, suitable to the solemnity of the subject, we cannot offend against heaven, and should not be considered as offenders against men.

That popular writer Dr. *Young*, in his poem on the LAST DAY, has given as particular a sketch as could be desired, of the generally received notion of that tremendous day.

“ Again the trumpet’s unremitted sound
“ Rolls the wide circuit of creation round,
“ An universal concourse to prepare
“ Of all that ever breath’d the vital air:

“ On

" On some wide field, which active whirlwinds
 " sweep,
" Drive cities, forests, mountains, to the deep,
" To smooth, and lengthen out th' unbounded
 " space,
" And spread an area for all human race.

" Now monuments prove faithful to their trust,
" And render back their long committed dust ;
" Now charnels rattle ; scatter'd limbs, and all
" The various bones, obsequious to the call,
" Self-mov'd advance ; the neck perhaps to
 " meet
" The distant head ; the distant legs, the feet.
" Dreadful to view, see through the dusky sky
" Fragments of bodies in confusion fly,
" To distant regions journeying, there to claim
" Deserted members, and complete the frame."

Again ;

" This sever'd head and trunk shall join
 " once more,
" Tho' realms now rise between, and oceans
 " roar.
" The trumpet's sound, each fragrant mote
 " shall hear,
" Or fix'd in earth, or if a-float in air,
 " Obey

“Obey the signal, wafted in the wind,
 “And not one sleeping atom lag behind.”

* * * * *

“The body thus renew’d, the conscious soul,
 “Which has perhaps been flutt’ring near the
 “pole,
 “Or ’midst the burning planets, wond’ring
 “stray’d,
 “Or hover’d o’er where her pale corpse was
 “laid;
 “Or rather coasted on her final state,
 “And fear’d, or wish’d for, her appointed fate:
 “This soul, returning with a constant flame,
 “Now weds for ever her immortal frame.”

The pious Bishop *Wilson*, whom no man will suspect of *intentional* misrepresentation; and whose orthodoxy, according to the usually received standard, none can find wanting, also expresses himself thus:—

“For GOD has made known to us, that
 “after death the souls of all good people go to
 “a place of *rest*, and *peace*, and *happiness*; and
 “the souls of wicked people to a place of *sorrow*
 “and

“and *misery*, there to remain till the end of the
“world, and the day of judgment.”

Others there are who speak more explicitly
of a middle state.

There are also many, who, though they
allow an immediate private judgment to each
soul as soon as disembodied, yet the far greater
majority of Christians of all divisions insist on
one final day of publick and universal judgment.

Thus all agree that at some distant, and as
it is generally supposed, far distant day, only
known to the Creator of all things, (though
some have calculated the time, among whom
Bengelius is the most ingenious) when the
world, and all that are therein, shall undergo
one complete and universal change; the vast
multitude of human beings, of all ages and all
countries, that ever existed, shall be summoned
to one grand assize or account, in the shapes
and properties of their existence in time, then
to receive a reward or punishment for the deeds
done in the body, whether they shall have been
good or evil.

Now,

Now, however supported on the letter of some passages of scripture this opinion may seem to be, yet are there many parts of doctrine in them, and many instances of spirits departed hence, being actually in a state of joyful sensation beyond the grave; enough, not only in number, but also force, to lay the literal construction of other passages, pointing to one future universal resurrection and judgment-day, under difficulties of comprehension and belief.

And therefore, though we may be reverently disposed to suspend a curious enquiry into the subject on that account; yet as men not extraordinarily inspired have been already positive about the reality of such a future general judgment-day, we may at least enquire why they should have been so positive, and have so fully decided about a thing, neither revealed in that sense, nor reconcileable with our most worthy ideas of God.

The question may be simply this: Why they should reckon on *one future* universal judgment-day, rather than believe that a general judgment-day, in a sense which the word "day" frequently

frequently bears in scripture, *now is?* As, “*Now* is the day of salvation.” “*Now* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” “Give us *this day*.” “A thousand years as one day,” &c.

To prove that such a day of judgment *now* may be, and that it is most probable, it may be considered as sufficient to shew, that the competent and proper subjects of a present and continued judgment, continued through an uninterrupted succession of times and persons, now are, and ever may be.

And not to admit the impiety or irreverence of a limitation of infinite power, in the infinite judge, it may be laid down as a fundamental truth, applicable even to the operations of God himself, that there cannot, in his infinite mind, be a possibility of any space of time between one occurrence, and another which is happening, or existing at the same time. This admitted, it is next to be considered whether there may, or may not, most probably be any distinct space of time, however short, between

the death of any one accountable being, and that of some other, in this world?

And if the instance of our small insignificant world be sufficient to prove, in the present inhabited state of it, that such a space, or point of time, may not be, we shall have abundant cause to conclude, (taking into our contemplation other inhabited worlds, and those without number, equally under the infinite government) that such a space, or intermission of mortality, *cannot* possibly be.

With respect, then, only to *this* world: We will enquire whether, in its present state of population, such an intermission of mortality may, or may not, be.

To do this in the simplest manner, we will consider, as well as we can, what the number of human inhabitants is, or may rationally be estimated at, in the habitable parts of the earth. Geographical calculators must be involved in some, perhaps in considerable uncertainty, on such a subject. But if it be true that this kingdom, in its present diminished state, contains,

contains, as is commonly believed, about eight millions of human beings, the following numbers, drawn from the best calculations, will be easily admitted:—

Europe	-	-	-	153 millions.
Asia	-	-	-	500
Africa	-	-	-	150
America	-	-	-	150

Total 953 millions.

But as many islands and tracts of land have been newly discovered, and found thickly peopled, and there is great reason to suppose that many others yet remain unknown in unexplored parts of the globe; we shall not exceed at all the bounds of probability, in setting down the total number of human inhabitants at one thousand millions: which number may be considered as a general medium, the continuation of births being reckoned equal to the numbers continually deceasing.

We will, in the next place, take a number for the average term of human life. It would

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be a speculation, bordering on presumption, for such frail beings as we are to attempt the supposition of a precise number, as the average term of life, for those in a state of moral accountability only; but such a thought is not important, further than to observe the non-necessity of such a point of knowledge, for a calculation of this kind. And as we engage in this enquiry with all reverence, with a view rather to shew improbability in popular notion, than to settle points beyond our reach, we will take the average term of the life of accountable beings at *thirty*, though it will be found probable, from bills of mortality, that far more die under that age than beyond it.

If, then, we divide the number one thousand millions by the number of seconds contained in thirty years, we shall have *one*, and a fraction of $\frac{5392}{1000000}$, which is more than one-twentieth—therefore we may set down at least *one* decease of a human being for every second of time in this world. I confess, that my first idea of the result of this calculation suggested a greater number; but *one* may be sufficient to answer the purpose of our argument, and to
shew

shew that a world like this can furnish, in the general course of the mortality of its inhabitants, continual subjects for an *uninterrupted* judgment-day.*

It may be argued, "That such a supposition
 "has a tendency to degrade, in some degree,
 "the infinite power and dignity of the Supreme
 "Being, by giving a kind of *process* to his
 "judgment, incompatible with that sublime
 "and glorious manner in which it may be
 "supposed he will ultimately judge the world."
 I grant that *piety*, as well as *opposition*, may urge
 such an objection; and I would by all means
 treat a pious disposition with the most respectful
 and humble attention.

But though it must be granted that the Eternal Fiat can adjudge, in the least conceivable

* Perhaps it may be objected, that "notwithstanding the *present* state of population in the world may justify such a calculation, it must have been otherwise in the infancy of the world." Granted. But it does not follow that it was otherwise when the doctrine of a future judgment, and the promises of eternal life, were first proclaimed; nor that when this world was created, there were not innumerable worlds of accountable creatures in being; which is a point yet to be further alluded to.

space of time, *a thousand millions* to their allotment, with as much ease as a single spirit; and that nothing can embarrass the instantaneous operation of his infinite power, every where at the same time;* yet is it to be considered that there is *another character*, included in the idea of the awful transaction we speak of—a character which stands in direct opposition to infinite wisdom and perception, viz. the poor, infirm, and trembling *patient*, in the judgment. That patient, it must be granted, must stand before his

* I speak here of his essential power, in himself, abstracted; that is, omnipotent. But his power in act must be circumscribed, in every work according to the subject wrought on: (and it is most probable as well as pious to believe, that the whole congeries of divine acts, is inadequate to the totality of the possibilities of divine power) for it is impossible, while an ant is an ant, that even the Almighty should communicate to an ant what he communicates to an angel. The susceptibilities are so disproportionate! the disproportion is infinitely greater between the instantaneous all-comprehending glance of the first mind, and (in the phrase of a great writer) “the consecutive series of ideas” in the human mind. This impossibility is no derogation from omnipotence. The object, the only object, of finite or infinite power, must be somewhat possible. Every thing is possible which does not imply a contradiction: what implies a contradiction, is necessarily impossible to omnipotence. And it is as absurd to suppose an infinite act to take place, as infinite, on a finite subject, as to assert that God can make the past to be future, or a creature equal to himself.

his judge in the weakness proper to his imperfection, and must receive the awful expostulation of that day, *as a creature*, not as a God with whom a second of time has no distinction from eternity.

A creature is finite, and his apprehension progressive. And if we attend to the implications of Sacred Writ, we have abundant reason to conclude, that the scrutiny of that solemn interview is, to him, a gradual series of reflections; otherwise what meaneth the teaching of these words: "When saw we thee a stranger
"and took thee in, naked and clothed thee,
"sick and in prison, and ministered unto thee?"
What otherwise meaneth the answer: "In as
"much as ye have done it unto one of the least
"of my disciples, ye did it unto me?"

This condescending language of the infinite Judge, as designed to comfort, and be the means of admission into eternal bliss, is not, surely, to the creature, the sensible business of a mere second of space or time.

Unity,

Unity, and the strictest indivisibility of space, are a part of the undoubted prerogative of the infinite mind; but perceptions distinctly sequent, must ever belong to the creatures whom God hath made.

The result of this seems to be, that a progressive, and continual day of judgment, so far as finite beings can be sensible of it, must really be the fact. I mean in respect, only, to this little diminutive world, were there no other.

But when we extend our views, in a manner as worthily as we can, towards the increased grandeur of other worlds, how far beyond dispute shall we find the numbers, crowding on our imaginations, in support of our doctrine, *a continual judgment-day!*

That I may the more fully be understood, let me extend the foregoing calculation only to the few worlds, or generally acknowledged worlds, in our solar system. In so doing, I will only have recourse, in this place, to the primary planets, in their different magnitudes, thus:—

Mercury

Mercury	-	diameter	3,000 miles.
Venus	-	-	9,330
Mars	-	-	5,400
Jupiter	-	-	94,000
Saturn	-	-	78,000
Georgium Sidus,	-	-	about 160,000*

Sum of the Diameters 349,730

We then say,—As 7,970 miles, the diameter of our earth, is to 1; (rejecting the fraction) so are 349,730, the sum of the diameters of the known primary planets of our system, to $43\frac{702}{97}$, the number of inhabitants which may be supposed to become disembodied, or to change their accountable state of existence, every second of time. This supposition must in its nature be far removed from *certainty*; but it is an opinion standing on the most worthy reasoning of learned and serious men, that the heavenly bodies to which we allude have their inhabitants—how far, indeed, resembling *man*, the principal inhabitant of this earth, would be a fruitless and improper enquiry; but that

* I have taken the diameter of this newly-discovered planet at the lowest estimation, viz. about twenty times that of our earth; though it is now said to be much larger.

those

those worlds were created and lighted up (if we may so speak) with any purpose in the infinite mind, inferior to those ends of communicating happiness, which he has with regard to this world, (a planet either farther removed from the sun than the others, or inferior in magnitude to most of them) is justly considered as an unworthy and irrational supposition. Neither is it to be supposed that infinite wisdom and goodness should place the inhabitants of one world in an accountable state, or in a capacity for ultimate superior happiness; and appoint others, of the same system, a different or inferior allotment.

It must be considered as improbable, that the principal inhabitant of this little world should be made the subject of laws so solemn, of a government so divine and glorious; and the principal inhabitant of another, more enlightened or magnificent world, stand unaccountable to his Creator, and uninterested in the infinite benignity of HIM who made him!

It may be objected, that "granting such
"existences in those other worlds, their ac-
"countableness

“countableness to their Creator, and their privileges of increasing happiness, it will neither follow that those worlds are peopled in the proportion supposed in this argument, nor that such beings are subject to the same kind of mortality and final judgment.”

I have not presumed to set down the supposition as *essential* to belief; but as a matter which *probability* seems to furnish for our consideration, and which the operations of infinite power and goodness must undoubtedly exceed, in reality and glory, beyond all comparison of infinite, with finite and frail conception.

It is sufficient for the main purpose of this consideration, that seeing there is acknowledged to be only *one* infinite judge of all accountable existences, and all the possibilities of things; the judgment of that judge may most certainly be *unceasingly employed*, or *unceasingly existent* to the feelings of his accountable creatures; and that consequently a *moral necessity* for a periodical, or one final judgment yet to come, is put out of the question. And that this *moral necessity* is out of the question, let us draw still stronger

stronger arguments, if not absolute proofs, from a still further extending of our views to the mortality and changes of existence, which every second of time must furnish, among the inhabitants of innumerable worlds, and systems of worlds, which we may seriously and devoutly suppose to exist, around the numberless suns, which so gloriously shine, through immeasurable and inconceivable space! With such ideas, how shall we be at a loss for a conception of the *last judgment* being, to the feelings of accountable creatures, a *continual now*!

I say only to the feelings of *accountable creatures*, because with respect to the abstract or essential knowledge of the supreme, and infinitely adorable Being himself, there cannot be, the same as in man, a distinction of *present* and *future* time, for judgment—a comparison of *now* with *then*! All such distinctions must be *created* in aid of finite apprehension, and must have their beginning and their end, in the infirmity of a created and imperfect nature.

If what has been said above shall be deemed sufficient to prove the possibility, perhaps I may
say

I say without arrogance, the *probability* of a *continual judgment*, among the created subjects of that judgment; it seems to me a more worthy idea to admit the *reality* of it, rather than the supposition of a cessation of consciousness, or sleep of the soul for a season, after the dissolution of its connection with the body, till the final destruction of this world, or the worlds which accountable beings inhabit; and then to suppose that one universal *resurrection*, or *call to judgment*, and a new state of consciousness, shall take place: more worthy, also, than to admit another supposition, of a sensible *suspence* and *uncertainty*, among those disembodied spirits who may have rendered themselves the proper objects of *punishment*, which they *must* receive; or, a delay of happiness to such as may have prepared themselves for some degree of *bliss*, which infinite goodness cannot want a disposition immediately to confer.

I say, it seems to me more worthy of our best ideas of operative, unceasing power and goodness, in the Supreme Being; unless it be set beyond a doubt, that *a different* system of government, and final allotment of dependant spirits,

spirits, is absolutely revealed, and declared from heaven. But this, it is presumed, is not the case.

It would be far too copious a subject, for such a work as this, to examine and compare all the passages of Holy Writ, and the various commentaries which the ingenuity and prejudices of men have made upon them, respecting the doctrine of one final, ultimate, universal resurrection of the bodies of all the human race, which shall have ever existed, at the destruction or end of the world; and how far they prove or disprove a positive divine revelation to the point: volumes after volumes might be written upon it, and the reader, who should peruse them, be left at last to think as he can, by the degree of light and infirmity of powers, peculiar to himself.

But it is most certain that a good life, and the consequent present happiness, and fitness for future manifestations of celestial good, do not depend upon common orthodoxy of belief in this matter, nor upon any positive profession of belief at all; an inward reverence of the
soul,

soul, as in the perpetual presence of an omniscient, all-good, and glorious Being—who is the God and Father of us all, and the God and Father, also, of our Blessed Saviour, the Lord JESUS CHRIST, who came and dwelt amongst men, as an oracle of divinity, and a pattern of moral conduct that should most certainly prepare men for the increasing enjoyment of heavenly peace and glory—is the better, and grand essential part, of a christian. This is an obedience better than the sacrifice, or offering up, of particular mysterious opinion; it is the “hearkening unto the voice of the LORD,” which, under the legal dispensation, was “better than the fat of rams;” and under any dispensation, general or personal, is the great privilege and glory of a recipient and accountable being.

Many will be found to agree with me in the substance of these last observations; but some will be unwilling, perhaps *unable*, to give up an article of former belief, however incomprehensible and pregnant with difficulty. With such I urge no acrimonious controversy; let them believe what they deem most sacred, and with
which

which they are most easy. GOD, of his infinite wisdom and mercy, sees them, as well as me, with a Creator's and a Father's eye; and our variety of weak conception, if unaccompanied with malignity of will, can never alter the benefits to be derived from more enlarged capacity of enjoyment, whenever He shall see meet to impart it.

But before I close this dissertation, let me at least hazard a persuasion, which I most surely have in myself, that the more attentively any man considers the sensations of his own mind; the inward proofs that are afforded him of his Creator's *continual* goodness towards him; and the more seriously and spiritually he considers the doctrines of Holy Writ, respecting a resurrection, a final judgment, and the glorious animating promises of a translation to a better world, or state of existence; and considers it in connection with the doctrines of infinite power, and the invariable energy of the Supreme Being; the less will he be attached to a doctrine which implies an unnecessary void of sensible existence in the creature, or an unnecessary suspension of goodness to him; and in that respect, therefore,
some

some "shadow of turning," in the adorable Creator himself.

In such a serious employment of thoughts and enquiries, I cannot but be of opinion, that a religious person will be more easy, at least to *suspend* his belief in the doctrine of such an universal *last judgment* as is commonly believed in, and be persuaded that a more spiritual construction of scriptural terms than men have usually affixed, must belong to the subject: that besides the general silence of the *Old Testament*, with respect to the time and mode of a *final judgment*, the doctrines of the *New Testament*, concerning the matter in question, are abundantly capable of this general sense, *that the day of every man's death is his LAST DAY*, and the season of his FINAL JUDGMENT, as to the "deeds done in the body:" a sense which the words prefixed to this discourse by no means militate against; but which many others that refer to the heavenly enjoyments of good men, and the "spirits of just men made perfect, already in heaven," abundantly conspire to confirm.

The doctrine of a final and precise *resurrection of the body*, so particularly believed in by many devout persons, and supposed to be essentially connected with that of one universal final judgment at the end of the world, is a subject held sacred and most important in theoretick divinity: but although we must wave a particular and elaborate discussion of that point also in this place, we must not pass it over in silence. And a few words may sometimes be better than many, especially on a topick whereon many have proved ineffectual.

As a believer in spiritual christianity, which exercises the *experience*, as well as the understanding, I will briefly give it as my opinion, that a man will have, in his last day, a poor account to render of his knowledge of, and interest in, the christian religion, who has not learned a better, a more spiritual sense of the doctrine of the *resurrection*, than the material one of the body—who considers not the resurrection of the more divine body of JESUS, as mystically instructive to man; and a resurrection of man within himself, into the principle of supernatural, and wholly spiritual life, in which the
spiritually-

spiritually-minded can only enjoy "life and peace," while the carnally-minded have the opposite experience, which is, *spiritual death*:—from this death they are not to be raised by the orthodoxy of any theoretick belief, or any thing short of an inward experience of JESUS, as *their resurrection and their life*; and from which, if they thereby rise not, CHRIST hath yet suffered in vain for them.

The more a christian professor becomes acquainted with the benefit of this spiritual sense of the resurrection, the more he will be desirous of being prepared, and raised by it, into fitness for that *last judgment-day*, which the day of *his* dissolution may, and most probably will, soon bring him to.

And the more our minds are exercised in the spiritual nature of the subject, the more we shall be awake to the apparent unimportance and absurdity of the opposite system of opinion, however sacred it has been made; however sanctioned by counsels, and the doctrines of churches.

If the word *absurdity* hurt any serious mind, I shall be sorry not to have my reasons for it appear sufficiently strong, at last, to justify me in the use of the term.

Nothing, surely, can well be more absurd than the ideas inculcated in the celebrated passage, which I have already quoted from Dr. *Young*. The idea of limbs and mangled parts of all the old bodies, that ever were mangled, disjointed, and separated, in all ages of the world, flying together perhaps from distant parts of the globe; darkening the air with their contrary and confused flight; and when united and associated, occupying one vast plain,* prepared by the burning and clearing away of numerous cities and impediments—like a prodigious army drawn up, and standing in the suspense of battle—is surely a most wild, romantic, and unphilosophical speculation; and yet nothing more ridiculous in idea than must naturally result from the common belief of a

* Some curious reasoners, or believers, have made it out to be the valley of Jehoshaphat; but they do not determine whether it shall be so used before or after the burning of the world.

general

general resurrection of the same particles, which constituted every dying body, at the precise moment of the extinction of life.

But the *impossibility* of such a doctrine being divine and true, may sufficiently appear from this; that in the progress of the changes of natural bodies, whereby, through decay and vegetation, and continual incorporation of the particles of one body with another, it may, and most probably does, happen continually, that the constituent particles of one human body, or some at least of those which composed it at the time of dissolution, become transferred to other human bodies, either by the medium of air or aliment; and may be constituent parts of such other bodies, at the moment of *their* dissolution also: yea, it is no improbable supposition, that a considerable portion of the particles of those human bodies which may be buried, in any district of Europe, on the day on which this page is written, may, by the revolutions of nature, after passing through various modifications of substances both animal and vegetable, become, a thousand years hence, constituent particles of human bodies dying in

Asia; two thousand years hence, such particles of human bodies dying in Africa; and ten thousand years hence, be properly parts of such bodies dying in the remotest parts of America!

And as the same particle of matter cannot be proper to two separate bodies, and occupy a place in both at the same time; it follows, on a principle of absolute philosophical truth, that the literal sense of a bodily resurrection, and an universal judgment of all human beings *together*, in the same material bodies from which the spirits were formerly separated, is a notion not only unfounded in the sublime doctrines of a scriptural resurrection, but positively an *impossible thing*.

I shall add to these remarks, one, not indeed of a scriptural complexion, or to be considered as logically demonstrative of what I have been attempting to render probable; but as a strong collateral argument; viz. that *in the hour of death*, all serious people, whose faculties are clear and lively, have one general uniform persuasion, that they are approaching the final decision and judgment *of their last day*: an uniform

uniform presentiment seems then to obtain, that according to their deeds shall their judgment *immediately* be: no apprehension seems then to prevail of an *intermediate* state, a cessation of consciousness, or suspension of judgment; but every person so circumstanced seems well and feelingly satisfied, that he is going immediately before his judge, either for a joyful or mournful purpose; and serious instances frequently occur of such persons appearing to *anticipate* the happiness, or unhappiness, into which they either fear to be immediately sentenced, or hope to be most graciously admitted.

Thus it seems most consonant with ideas of divine operation, on the created susceptibilities of accountable nature;—with the power and goodness of an eternal cause;—with instances in Holy Writ, of prepared spirits being already rewarded, in another life;—with those unprepared for happiness, being in a state of punishment;—and with the expectations of souls departing, to believe that the day of death is the solemn *last day*; the day when the spirits of those that go down to the graves finally hear the voice of the Son of God, and pass to their

their great account. The body returns unto the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it.

And it is presumed, that all scripture passages, which have been made to favour the idea of identical resurrection and re-union, while those ideas of them are contradictory to the laws of nature and truth, are ever reconcileable to a different and more consistent sense; though the limits of this work must preclude a discussion, for the present, more minute.

Neither can it be admitted, that a disbelief of such a general resurrection, can at all invalidate the evidence and truth of that one great and marvellous event—the actual resurrection of the body of JESUS CHRIST; which some have religiously feared would be brought into doubt by the prevalence of these sentiments. *That* was an authenticated, divinely significant, and awful resurrection; standing, in the economy of salvation and glory, utterly unconnected with the foregoing subject, and independant of the end of man.

DISSER-

DISSERTATION

• N

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT; BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

Matth. xxv. 46.

NOTHING is more common than for mankind to censure either what they cannot easily understand, or which, through the prejudice of education, they have been accustomed to consider as erroneous. For this, *four* especial reasons may be assigned.

1st. The common weakness of human nature.

2dly. The unwillingness which too generally prevails, to undertake the labour of consideration,

tion, and the calm investigation of a subject for the sake of truth.

3dly. The shame of seeming inferior to another in receiving information. And,

4thly. The reluctance of being found to have erred, by contradicting or relinquishing a former opinion.

And wherever the discovery of moral and religious truth is not held in the highest esteem, as the ultimate and most important object, it is no wonder that people shrink from the labour of enquiry, and are without an adequate motive to the most happy employment of their faculties. There are, indeed, few subjects, not mathematically demonstrable, that the human mind can be employed upon with a prospect of absolute certainty. But as the powers of an immortal mind are capable of various employments, and must be employed upon various subjects, either of inferior or superior moment; it is at least of considerable concern, that those subjects should not be neglected, the importance
of

of which is confessedly the greatest, both in the present and in future existence.

If we admit the highest degree of importance to stand connected with *spiritual* subjects, it follows that we must consider those subjects as most worthy of our highest regard. The sublimity of their nature must ever preclude our treating upon them with success and satisfaction, in a trifling and unsolicitous frame of mind; but on the contrary, so long as we engage in such enquiries in an humble and earnest disposition, there is no theme too sublime for our thoughts, or too elevated to be consistent with our reasonable duty.

The aids of our weakness, to be derived from Sacred Writ, and the revelations which infinite wisdom has made, are abundant encouragements to us, for the pursuit of those contemplations, which the sloth, dissipation, or false humility, of the human mind, arising from various, natural, and accidental causes, would place out of our province, and beyond our reach.

It

It is excellently written in the animating doctrines of revelation, that "light is sown for the righteous, and joy and gladness for the upright in heart." Now as there is no light more important and glorious in itself than the light of knowledge and faith, arising to our spiritual nature: no joy and gladness equal in degree with those which arise from spiritual faith and hope: so there is nothing which we should seek after, with equal earnestness and alacrity of mind.

We may be sure of this, that among those opinions which are the fruits of passion, prejudice, and the common supineness of mankind, we shall meet with very little help, in the attainment of those truths, which are above passion, above prejudice, and only discoverable by a patient and independant spirit. Therefore we must learn to restrain our solicitude for popular approbation, and endeavour to attain satisfaction from different sources. We must elevate ourselves above the common mists and obscurity of a cloudy situation, before we can attain a prospect at once extensive, bright, and delightful.

Few

Few men are found so great scepticks with regard to the reality of greater light into things not seen, as to believe that there are not innumerable truths, which they have never yet known, and which they cannot discover by common-place enquiries into those maxims of human prudence, and the general doctrines of religion and futurity, which prevail in the contradictory and inconsistent systems of christian societies, and the world at large.

Few men, we may venture to say none at all, are so unreasonable as to believe that the fountain of wisdom is confined in his operations, or governs himself in an uniform revelation of all truths alike to all men, in all their various states or degrees of solicitude: but, that as different men have different degrees of strength and clearness of natural intellect, proceeding from the same perfect source of wisdom and goodness; so different men are endued with different degrees of *spiritual* capacity for conception and communication, according to the frame of their minds and desires, and the unimpeachable pleasure of the Almighty.

And

And as all men have a greater or less capacity for thinking on abstruse and spiritual subjects—as, for instance, on the *Being of God*, which is a subject superior to the comprehension of all human reason, (nor could any finite mind comprehend a full *revelation* of the infinite) and that capacity, however varied, is natural to the human mind, though no standard of equality be fixed; so it may be as natural for one man to possess two degrees of capacity, and another five, as for another to possess but one; and the employment of those two or five degrees may and must be as proper to the possessor, as for the other to employ but his one. The employment being proportioned to the faculties, must be productive of effects unequal in the same ratio as the powers, in the three characters.

Now all religion, and spiritual knowledge, or persuasion, is only valuable to man so far forth as it enlightens and satisfies his mind, *from conviction*, and leads him to a pleasing belief or hope, respecting the doctrine of a future spiritual existence, in a mode of being to which the present feeble and transitory one must soon, at farthest, give place. To be unsollicitous,
then,

then, about truth, in such a state as ours, and implicit in our admission of common opinions of futurity, were both unwise for ourselves; ignoble in the use of our different powers of conception, and ungrateful towards the source of all life and particular communication.

From the foregoing considerations, may be inferred a natural and religious right, which sundry learned and pious men have used, in giving their sentiments of *futurity* in a far different sense from that which has generally obtained among christian churches, since the first divisions and "corruptions of christianity." I mean chiefly with respect to the doctrine of *eternity of punishment*, or an *endless infliction of torment*, upon those who depart this life, not being in the one true faith; or not being fully prepared for the joys of eternity. The main arguments, which such writers have used, have generally been *three-fold*, viz.

1st. From the infinite and unalterable *goodness* of the Almighty, incompatible with the idea of unceasing torment.

2^{dly}. From

2dly. From the original import of terms in ancient languages.

3dly. From the tenor of faith and opinions, which have been promulgated by inspired, learned, and good men.

To go over such a field of argument, even by a brief retrospect of all which hath been said, and handed down to us by writers in our language, would be an undertaking too large for the plan of a small miscellaneous works. But as the subject is of infinite moment to the happiness of many serious people, and the harmony of religious society, I cannot be easy to omit some few observations, which have impressed my mind concerning it; and I am the more emboldened to such a communication, on account of the consciousness which I feel, of a general good-will to my fellow beings, and a wish to promote the most worthy ideas of Him, to whom, alone, I hold myself accountable.

The general laws of mental pain and punishment, laid on all irreverent and unrighteous men,

men (the fear of which is impressed upon them, during the time of their impiety here) are undoubtedly ordered by the wise and good spiritual agency of the Creator and Preserver of men : the Being who superintends the peculiarity of our nature, for the most gracious purposes of our improvement and our happiness !

But as, without a direct approach to what we deem blasphemy, we cannot suppose that He is not infinitely good ; it follows, that to suppose an infinitely good Being, possessing at the same time *all power*, can cause a single sensation of present pain (which includes fear of future misery) to take place, but for the purpose of reformation in the sufferer, would be an inconsistent and unworthy thought ! I will not say, it would be an *impious* and *punishable* thought, because I am persuaded that many pious persons have ideas of divine abstracted vengeance, in the Supreme Being, sufficient to make them believe that He can and will punish, from motives of his own infinite hatred of sin, those beings whom they think He has *a right* to deem, and *must* deem, the objects of his infinite displeasure ; and that for such unhappy

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patients there is no remedy, through the infinite duration of eternity.

Some may go so far as to have ideas of the *kind* of sin, and *degree* of malignity, or disbelief of supposed divine doctrines, which must subject immortal spirits to such a doom: though I hope but few, in the comparison, will be found to go so far: and it is most probable, that where such instances of presumption occur, they are more often seen in persons who possess an unamiableness, and sourness of piety, which, while it renders them the objects of divine compassion in christian redemption, can never fit them for the love and harmony of heaven, without the change, which that redemption is intended to produce.

But though it may be the prerogative and good pleasure of Infinite Goodness to pardon, and receive into his favour, all the zealous and presumptuous professors of religion—all the incongruous believers in his perfections—all the ignorant confounders of his glorious attributes; yet is this no justifiable reason for others to give that kind of direct or tacit acquiescence in
apparent

apparent error—and error, too, of an unhappy tendency!

We are not to neglect the reformation of one another's judgments, in this accountable and imperfect state, because it is within the power of the GOD of infinite goodness, ultimately to rectify all unworthy thoughts of his perfect nature, and pardon all passionate and hasty opinions. On the contrary, we have a motive to the brotherly kindness of calm communication, because we are assured, from examples, that much happiness has arisen to individuals, and sometimes to society, from new considerations of truth, and more enlarged views of spiritual things.

For this reason it is that a writer can stand justified, to himself and to the candid part of the world, in giving forth his opinions founded in serious thought, and imparted in good-will. If any man has to oppose general doctrines and prejudices, he must expect a considerable share of popular censure, without that degree of attention to his arguments, which may be necessary to give them their full weight; and

must not be afflicted at rejection and calumny: but it is sufficient for him to have acted from the best motive; not to have weakened the principles of virtue, and to have a persuasion in his mind that he has been attempting a good work.

So much may be properly said and considered as preparatory to some particular reflections on those awful words which stand at the head of this discourse: "These shall go away
"into everlasting punishment; but the righteous
"into life eternal."

Upon the right understanding of this part of the sentence, depends much of the happiness of believers in christianity: for in all the Bible there is not a text of more positive declaration, with respect to the interest of immortal beings.

There is doubtless in the eternal mind, an immutable distinction between *good* and *evil*. What that good and evil are, and wherein precisely they differ from each other in all their circumstances, as referrible to the circumstances in which created beings stand, is a part of that perfect knowledge, which surpasseth all human powers,

powers, and can be only the prerogative of the source of wisdom and perfection.

Man is made, in some limited degree, the recipient of the knowledge of his perfect Creator, and according to the degree of his perception and capacity for improvement, he is, most undoubtedly, an accountable being; a being who must be justly punishable for disobedience and error, according to the perfection of those principles of goodness, by which he is constituted what he is. But while a complete knowledge of himself, or even of the mode of his existence, surpasses his powers of comprehension, it must follow, that his knowledge of the essence and degree of good which attends, and of the nature and degree of any evil which can attend him, must be imperfect, and should preclude all presumption and positiveness respecting them.

He feels himself capable of happiness and misery, which he cannot either command or remove, at his pleasure: he *feels* himself an accountable being, under the experience of that happiness or misery; but to what *degree* he is

accountable, or to what *degree* approvable, or liable to the punishment of unhappiness, in this or a future state—he knows not: perhaps also it may be justly supposed, that, because being finite, and ever to be finite, in the exercise of his faculties, he never can know. There is, then, a powerful reason, why he should not work up his mind to a positive conclusion about an eternally miserable allotment, from the will of an infinite and perfectly good Being.

Man is told, and may thankfully rest assured, that “eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, “neither hath it entered into the heart of man “to conceive, the good things which God “hath in store for them that love him.” This must be true, both with respect to the kind and degree of those good things; and “the peace “of God” is said to be “a peace which passeth “all understanding.” But the actual experience of it is the effect of infinite goodness in the Supreme Being, and every gratefully attentive creature will believe and trust in it, as far as his finite powers can enable him to do. On the contrary, it must needs be, that *everlasting punishment, or a never-ending torment*, is,
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in itself, what a finite being not only cannot comprehend, or see any good in, with reference to the tormentor, or the miserable sufferer; but so far as man can judge, or reason of it, such a punishment of helpless beings must be considered as militating against our most comfortable, endearing ideas, of perfect goodness in the Creator of all—the infinite source of everlasting benevolence!—and therefore must, by us, be unworthily attributed to the operation of his will.

To talk, as some have done, of a *necessity* in the *perfection* of the divine nature, to punish any wicked, finite creatures, with never-ending torment, is talking, if possible, still more presumptuously; for we must, in time, and in eternity itself, remain at an infinite distance from the power of *comprehending*, what HIS adorable existence is; and consequently *ignorant* of such an essential attribute of HIS infinitely transcendent nature, were it clearly possible for such an attribute to exist.

“But,” says an objector, “we *have* the doctrine of *everlasting punishment*, to be believed

“lieved in, if the scriptures themselves be
 “not false: in what sense then are we to un-
 “derstand the words of the text, and the
 “numerous other similar and equally awful
 “passages?”

Let me say, in the first place, in reply to the common opinion, about the *multitude* of such positive declarations contained in the Bible, that the number is not large, which can be adduced in argument. *Five* places only occur in the whole New Testament (and the learned seem to agree in the point) wherein the future misery of the wicked is described as *eternal* or *everlasting*; and these are, *Matth.* xviii. 8; xxv. 41, and 46. *Mark* iii. 29; and 2 *Thess.* i. 9; unless, indeed, the words of Jude in reference to Sodom be taken in, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” But to come to the construction of the expressions occurring in those texts, so far as the critical construction of language is concerned. It is generally allowed as a fact, that the original and derivative Greek words *αιων*, *eternity*; and *αιωνιος*, *eternal*, or *everlasting*, may in general, as in many places they necessarily do, signify only a limited

limited duration: and that their import, in themselves, is certainly much more general and indefinite, than the English words *eternity* and *everlasting* (by which they are commonly translated in the Bible) are understood to be, in our language. And as it is further agreed, that, in many places of scripture, those Greek words, and others of synonymous import, frequently signify a distant indefinite period, or periods, of duration; it is reasonable, and consonant with our best ideas of the divine benevolence, to conclude, that when applied also to the unhappy state of wicked men, in futurity, they were not designed to convey, and cannot truly convey, the positive sense of *never-ending* torment.

A learned friend very pertinently remarks, that "the true meaning of *Aiwv* is an undefined duration. Undefined, either 1st. because it is not necessary to state the limits; or, 2^{dly}. because the limits are not known. But because the bounds of the duration are not assigned, that it has no bound is not a consequence."

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Could any satisfaction to the Deity, who in Himself is superior to a possibility of being made unhappy, be conceived to arise from the execution of such a dreadful sentence, on offending creatures, the case would be most materially altered. But when it is considered (as without begging the question I think it well may be) that no kind or degree of punishment (so long as GOD remains to be love) can possibly be inflicted on such creatures, but from a motive of reclaiming and refining them for happiness: that *infinite punishment* could not possibly be inflicted, but from motives of overwhelming, infinite *vengeance* in the infinite Judge; and that the latter cannot possibly be true; it seems to follow, as a cheering and glorious consequence, that *everlasting punishment* can only mean a *continual punishment*, for a limited period, or limited periods of duration, and that for the ultimate advantage of the *punished*!

But some will object, that admitting this to be probable in argument, it would be a most dangerous doctrine to promulgate in the world, among presumptuous sinners; because it would give them encouragement to continue in their
obduracy

obduracy and wickedness, so long as they were countenanced to believe that their future punishment would *not be unceasing*; but that they should, at some future period of existence, be delivered from it, and made happy.

This, were it a sound argument, would indeed be a strong reason why we should continue to profess and teach doctrines, which we can neither heartily believe to be true, nor find taught in the pages of Sacred Writ. But such a consequence is not reasonably to be apprehended. We will endeavour to shew why it is not.

Let us suppose any reasonable being, or human being, capable of making any rational deduction from given premises, to be told that for a short uncertain life, or uncertain part of that life, spent in sensual indulgence, or any kind or kinds of immoral conduct, he should most assuredly receive, not an *everlasting* punishment of *unceasing* torment, but only the punishment of a continual torment, *ten* hours, for every hour of his transgressing life. If such a human being be capable of any estimate
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of wretchedness, from any threatening or doom at all, it is impossible to conceive that he should gather obduracy, and set at defiance, such a doom as this—or if this could have no influence on his conduct, it is not reasonable to conclude, that the unlimited doctrine of eternal, unceasing punishment, would have any better effect. Indeed we need not go to supposition on this subject; but have recourse to actual fact; by which we shall be abundantly convinced, that this most dreadful doctrine, proclaimed and urged in all its terror, is generally ineffectual to guard the vicious part of mankind against those various kinds of wickedness which deform the world.

It may be laid down as a positive maxim of truth; that there is nothing good in human conduct, but what proceedeth from the principle of love. It may be laid down as another maxim equally certain, that there is no mind so susceptible of that principle, as the mind which is fully convinced of the essentiality of supreme love, in the Supreme Being, who governs all nature according to the supremacy of his love, which is his unchangeable will and power.

power. And to talk of goodness and virtue in a human being, whose mind is not strongly influenced by ideas of his Creator's loving-kindness and mercy, is to talk without wisdom, and even without reason.

A man whose predominant idea of his Creator is that of his being an inexorable judge, capable of inflicting unceasing torment upon those who transgress against the purity of his laws, can have within him no sacred principle of loving obedience towards his God, and therefore no genuine source of good-will towards his fellow beings. He may be a terrifying believer in the *power* of the Almighty; or, as a *patient*, he may be a more or less miserable melancholick; but he cannot be a cheerful and exemplary member of religious or civil society.

There are *degrees* of such an unhappy belief respecting the nature of God, and in proportion to the degree of belief, will the unhappy influence be; but as the *supreme felicity* of the human mind is ever dependant upon a supreme sense of divine benignity, it must be our worthiest employment to endeavour to propagate
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the doctrine of that benignity among all classes of men, while we are not forgetful to remind the most vicious, that though God Almighty cannot be supposed to punish them with torments without end; yet every addition of their disobedience and obduracy must, according to the laws of righteousness mixed with mercy, be attended with a proportionate punishment, before they can be refined and made fit for happiness: that they must have their due proportion of that punishment which is said to be *eternal, everlasting, or continual*, because capable of no intermission from sensual gratification, when the capacity for such gratification is dissolved with the body.

This observation I would particularly address to those of my readers, (for many such there are) who though they cannot fully believe in endless divine vengeance, are afraid of professing a disbelief, for fear of evil consequences, in hardening the minds of the already wicked and impenitent. And I shall here declare it to be my most solemn belief, that the most powerful charm that can be used, for the awakening and reformation of such a depraved state of mind

mind is, the charm of heavenly truth : " Cease
" to do evil, and learn to do well ;" because
the God of love requires it, as the only terms
on which his creatures can be happy, without
the *punishment* which He must otherwise inflict,
(ever proportionate to their crimes) in order
to *make* them fit for the happiness which they
reject.

Neither let any man be suffered to console
himself with the thought, that on account of
the smallness of the number of his favourite
vices, or on account of the comparative small-
ness of the evil contained in them, he, on this
principle, shall have the *smaller*, the *shorter*, the
more *tolerable* punishment, and be soon refined
for happiness. It is an irrefragable truth, that
the degree of malignity consists not (in heavenly,
any more than earthly estimation) so much in
the action, as in the motive to action ; and the
violence done to the *inward* convictions of the
offender, respecting the laws of righteousness,
truth, and love.

Human judgment, indeed, principally takes
cognizance of the motive, as outward circum-
stances

stances make it appear in evidence ; but it is the supreme prerogative of the *Searcher of hearts* to be intimately acquainted with his own work of grace and conviction, in the mind of every man. He must know the exact proportion which every man's disobedience bears to the degree of his knowledge ; and, whether the action be small or great in itself, or its intended evil be small or great with regard to society—we may humbly conceive is not the sole question with the divine and perfect Judge ; but how great has been the degree of evil produced by the disobedience, in excluding His offered good, and strengthening the mind in habits of malignity?

Men do not in their natural state refrain from the commission of the most impious deeds, so much from the fear of future *everlasting punishment*, as from a fear of temporary suffering, or as from the fear of being cut off from this world, which they have made their licentious home, and the place of their imaginary good. The dread of disgrace and infamy, among their fellow beings, seems to be a more powerful incentive to what is called
moral

moral virtue among men, than all the terrors which religion has been made to hold out, in the doctrines of future unceasing torment.

When man comes to regulate himself according to the inward principles of virtue, it is generally, perhaps always, from the operation upon his mind, of a principle different from that of a *tremendous fear*, viz. from the awakening consideration of the *goodness* and *mercy* of his Creator, and the reverence he owes to Him on account of his glorious attributes, and benignant dispensations towards his creatures.

Such at least are the sound operative principles of real religion; and were it possible to conceive a religious man drawn to devotion, and a regard to righteousness and truth, only from the gloomy fear of *unceasing punishment*, there would be no life of goodness or worthiness in such a character, which could either make him a good member of human society, or a prepared associate for redeemed and generous spirits, in the element and kingdom of love.

Fear, in a certain sense, is beyond all controversy enjoined us, and a mean of salvation; thus, when we read such an injunction as this: "Be not high-minded, but fear;" and again, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling:" we are to consider ourselves as beings who without fear cannot become partakers of a lively hope, or confidence, in the clemency and mercy of heaven: but as "love casteth out fear," so that fear by which we can essentially profit, is not a fear of GOD, as a tremendous and arbitrary judge; but a fear of transgressing against a GOD of love and of infinite purity, from whom all our mercies flow, and who should be the glorious object of our continual love, reverence, and adoration. And those affections are the only means by which we can rise to a sensible experience of that freedom, pleasure, and life, which He is calling us to enjoy in his service, as preparatory for the kingdom of eternal bliss. The "fear and trembling" with which salvation may be wrought out, though inspired from an awful sense of the divine majesty, is ever accompanied with an inward delight, and thus excellently described: "serve the LORD with fear, and *rejoice with trembling.*"

THE man who feels himself influenced by no better, or more powerful motive to devotion, than fear of endless punishment, may be a gloomy and unhappy attendant at the outward altar; but no free disciple of JESUS CHRIST, or lively and happy worshipper of the GOD of love—the Father which is in heaven!

It may perhaps be further said in objection, that, admitting the original Greek words to be capable of a *limited* construction; and *unceasing torments* to be consequently *not* intended in the original language of the New Testament; a yet unsurmountable difficulty lies in the way, viz. That the same word which is used to denote *everlasting*, before *punishment*, and *fire*, or *burning*, is also used before *life*: and that, if eternity of torment, in the most dreadful sense of the terms, be held in suspense, *eternal life*, or the promised rewards of the righteous, must be held as an uncertain doctrine also; which would be to admit an opinion that would destroy the authenticity of the gospel promises, and make that glorious part of revelation a dubious matter.

But we are not without our strong and cogent reasons to prove, that this objection is ill-founded, and without weight. For there most certainly is a wide distinction between the different senses taught by the original Greek words, when applied to the Supreme Being, and his essential unchangeable kingdom of life; and every other subject to which the original of our words *eternal* and *everlasting* can possibly be applied.

But with regard to the strict literal sense of the original, I shall here quote the words of a most intelligent and learned, though anonymous writer. “*Αἰών*, in sacred scripture, *never* means *unending* duration, else it would mean so always. A word of time always denotes somewhat fixed, or indeterminate. If fixed, and if applied to divine duration, it must invariably mean infinite: but if it be indeterminate, it may with equal propriety to both infinite and finite: for it neither bounds the former, nor extends the latter. Such a word is *Αἰών*.”

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The idea of *unceasing* duration applies with peculiar and expressive propriety, to the unchangeable Source of all perfection, and to whatever is the essential presence, or irradiation, of that underived and glorious nature; but as every thing which partakes not of his supreme essentiality, is necessarily finite and mutable; it follows, that the same sense of the terms cannot apply, with equal propriety, to subjects of such different natures; that there must be an essential difference between their constructive import in the two cases, however unable man is, precisely to define that difference: and if there *necessarily* be such a distinction, it follows that the duration of all punishment, darkness, death, and misery, may be but as finite is to infinite! And no greater distinction could an humble advocate, for the ultimate cessation of future punishment, wish to contend for!*

* The ray of encouragement thrown out, in substance, by Archbishop Tillotson, against the dreadful doctrine of *unceasing* punishment, viz. that the Almighty must be morally bound to fulfil His *promises* of mercy, while *threatenings* of judgment are not morally binding upon His veracity, seems to be a distinction, on this subject, not useful; and, not to lessen that writer's great abilities, or his piety, unworthy of him and the cause!

But to instance, in the first place, sundry passages in the Old Testament. No serious and considerate person, surely, can believe, or even suppose, that when we read *Gen.* xvii. 8, in the promise made to Abraham, of the land of Canaan "for an *everlasting possession*:" when we read *Gen.* xlix. 26: In the blessing of Jacob, respecting the inheritance of Joseph, that it should be "unto the utmost bound of the *everlasting hills*:" when we read *Exod.* xl. 15, that the sons of Aaron were to be anointed "an *everlasting priesthood*:" when we read *Hab.* iii. 6, that "the *everlasting mountains* were scattered:" no serious and considerate man, I say, can suppose that the same duration could be intended, as when we read *Gen.* xxi. 33, "the *everlasting God*:" *Deut.* xxxiii. 27, "the *eternal God* is thy refuge, and underneath are the *everlasting arms*:" *Psa.* cxix. 142, "thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness:" *Psa.* cxlv. 13, "thy kingdom is an *everlasting kingdom*:" *Jer.* x. 10, "God is an *everlasting king*."

The necessary difference in the sense of these and similar passages from the Old Testament,
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it is presumed, must strike very forcibly, and be admitted on the first reflection. A latitude of construction, then, must lie in the sacred writings, determinable, according to our best conceptions, from the nature of the subject. Neither is this latitude peculiar to the Old Testament: the words *eternal* and *everlasting*, in the New Testament, excepting in the few instances mentioned before, are applied to, or predicated of *happiness*, for the encouragement of men to the love of virtue and holiness, and the abundant proportion of phrases in this sense, should be regarded as a proof of the strongest tendency of the gospel, to exalt the attributes of the divine goodness, over every other doctrine or subject connected with the religion of men.

We have also warnings against *everlasting punishment*; but as in the Old Testament, we have, also, in the New, a proof, over and above that from the unprescribed import of the original words, that a latitude of construction *must* be used, and the idea of unceasing torment *must* be rejected: for in *Jude* 7, where the example of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Gomorrah is mentioned, as “suffering the vengeance of *eternal fire*,” the meaning cannot be more than this, that those cities suffered it *lastingly* and *continually*, without intermission, till they were consumed by it, or till the purpose of the burning was completely accomplished; but no longer duration can be understood, without rendering the sense ridiculous.

It may perhaps be objected here, “that this text was not intended to convey the idea of the burning of the cities themselves; or as a mere mortal punishment of the inhabitants; that *such* a judgment was not alluded to afterwards, as a warning to the wicked; but that the judgment was considered as inflicted on the *people*, for a prelude of an endless spiritual burning; and expressed by that figure of rhetorick—*The thing containing for the thing contained.*”

But this, it is humbly conceived, could not be the sense; *unceasing torment* was not then considered as inflicted, or to be inflicted, on the spirits of the inhabitants, after their bodies were burnt with the city: no such thing seems to be implied

implied in the context. In different solemn allusions to this remarkable judgment in the Old Testament, it is considered as a judgment particularly inflicted upon the people, as inhabitants of a city completely burnt up by unconquerable fire, and never more to be built; or the place of it to become regarded, in respect of its former habitations. The prophets of those times had no idea of a punishment of *unceasing fire*—preying, or to prey, upon the people so judged, in another life. Had that been their idea, no degree of *comparison*, in favour of those devoted people, would have been made. But, says Jeremiah, “the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people, is *greater* than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hand stayed on her.”

As the supposed strongest arguments for the certainty of *unceasing torments*, are drawn from the revelation of the *New Testament*, we will attend especially to that evidence, and particularly to what our LORD himself has said, in reference to this remarkable event. When he commissioned his disciples to go forth, and preach

preach the gospel, he told them; "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be *more tolerable* for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." Upon which I would observe,

1st. That *the people* on whom the judgment above alluded to was inflicted, must here be meant; for the *land* itself was not a subject of punishment; and another generation of *men* were not blameable for the faults of a former wicked one.

2^{dly}. That on our LORD's veracity we are authorized to conclude, that the punishment of the souls of those wicked inhabitants could not be "suffering the vengeance of eternal, or *un-ceasing*, fire;" for had that been the case, as was argued above from Jeremiah, no degree of *com-parison* would lie in their favour. It could not have been said to be *more tolerable* in the day of judgment, for those who were "suffering," or doomed to suffer (in an infinite sense of the words)

words) "the vengeance of eternal fire," than for such as simply rejected the messengers of the gospel! A sin, which, however great, some of the primitive christians themselves, and especially Paul, afterwards not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles, had been guilty of.

It has been objected to the opposers of the doctrine of *unceasing* torment, and it has been objected to me, "that there is a state, spoken of by our LORD himself, than to be in which, "a man *had better never have been born*. But "that upon the universal principle of *ceasing* "punishment, for the purpose of refinement "for *after enjoyment*, such a state never could "be; for that, howsoever long or miserable a "suffering which *terminates* may be, it can bear "no proportion to eternity of joy afterwards, "and therefore it must, on my principle, be a "good to the most wicked, and the most miserably punished, *to have been born*."

I grant that something distantly resembling such a declaration, is made by our LORD, respecting the man who should betray him; but as, in many other cases, where an ill-founded
cause

cause is in danger of being overturned, so in this a sense is borrowed, and brought in aid of the difficulty, which is not strictly true. Our LORD does not use (according to both Matthew and Mark) a word of *comparison*: he does not say, in allusion to the treachery of Judas—*better* had it been—but “it had been *good* for “that man if he had not been born.”

But when we consider a little the character of Judas, who, though among the chosen apostles, was become so corrupt, that his master said of him *he had a devil*; when we consider that he was become so diabolical in his mind, as to be, perhaps, the only professed friend and servant, capable of so foul a deed as betraying the Lord JESUS; we cannot wonder that an expression, particularly strong and emphatical, should be used on that occasion. And more especially when it is certain that some of the expressions of the holy JESUS, tending to impress the minds of men with a sense of the enormity of a *sinful* state, are not to be understood by finite capacities, according to the common import of human language—as for instance; “it is *easier* for a *camel* (or according
“to

“to some interpreters, a *cable*) to pass through
 “the *eye of a needle*, than for a rich man to
 “enter into the kingdom of heaven.” It is,
 however, easier to conceive, that it were *good*
 for the *most diabolical* of men *never to have been*
born, than that, being born, annihilation would
 be better than ultimate *unceasing* happiness,
 after the most long and painful process of re-
 finement. But annihilation of the being of
 wicked men, by some writers conceived to be
 implied by the frequent mention of the *death*
 of the wicked, in opposition to the happy and
 seriously eternal life of the righteous; would,
 I think, be a belief more consonant with the
 essential goodness of the Almighty, than an
 unceasing torment for their temporary crimes.

Others have attempted to refute the doctrine
 of a *cessation of torment*, and an ultimate resto-
 ration of *all* accountable beings to happiness,
 by urging, as the strongest argument of all,
 what is declared respecting him who *sinneth the*
sin against the Holy Ghost; that he “hath never
 “forgiveness, either in this world, or in that
 “which is to come.”

This

This passage, the substance of which is related by several of the Evangelists, as the doctrine of JESUS CHRIST himself, hath a most serious aspect; and it is certain that human learning hath been often baffled in attempting to expound it, especially where the precise nature of the sin itself hath been taken into consideration. And perhaps with a view to elucidate the terms of the *penalty*, it may not be necessary previously to consider the sin at all. Neither would I be presumptuous in giving my own opinion, unsanctioned as perhaps it is by that of any other person. But as I shall do it with humility and reverence, as in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, I trust I shall at least not injure, and hope I may do something towards advancing, the simplicity of gospel truth.

The opinions of others have been various; some of which are the following:—

I. That the sin against the Holy Ghost, is sinning against light and knowledge.

II. That it was the particular sin of Judas, in betraying his master.

III. That

III. That it is the imputation of the divine and miraculous works of JESUS, to a diabolical agency.

But respecting each of these I would just observe,

1. If sinning against light and knowledge were the particular offence mentioned, then every sin, or every punishable transgression, must be the sin against the Holy Ghost; for nothing can be a punishable sin but what is committed against conviction, against light and knowledge, more or less clear.

2. The sin of Judas seems to have lain far more in the *previous* wickedness of his own heart, which was known to his master to be *diabolical*, than in the act itself of giving the sign: for if the sin could lie in the act of betraying, then, at least equally, in the act of condemning him, when the evidence *against* him was opposed by so much stronger evidence *for* him, in the mind of Pilate, that he was convinced of the iniquity of the sentence, and hypocritically

hypocritically washed his hands, saying, "I
" will be clear of the blood of this man."

3. If the sin against the *Holy Ghost* were, imputing the works of JESUS to a diabolical agency; then were the mere rabble among the Jews (under the prepossessions of their doctors and their laws) finners against the *Holy Ghost*, in the worst sense; and could never have been intitled to forgiveness, notwithstanding their ignorance: then, also, must that memorable prayer of JESUS himself, to his Father, on account of the darkness of the Jews, have been impertinent; "Father, *forgive* them, for they
" know not what they do!"

It seems, therefore, probable, that all these three different opinions have been at least erroneously conceived.

And it seems highly reasonable to conclude, that before any accountable being can be said, in the sense our LORD intended, to be a sinner against the *Holy Ghost*, he must first be convinced in his mind that there *is* an *Holy Ghost*, as the ministration of spiritual life in man; and
that

that must be *after* a general belief hath taken place with respect to the spirituality of the christian religion: thus Paul, upon a certain occasion, addressed some of the christian believers: "Have you received the *Holy Ghost* "since ye *believed*?" Their answer was, "We "have not so much as heard whether there be "any *Holy Ghost*."

In *this* state of ignorance, at least, must those Jews be supposed to have been, who imputed our Lord's miracles to a diabolical power. And it is very remarkable, that when he made his declaration concerning the sin against the *Holy Ghost*, he did not address himself to those who reproached him, and denounce any judgment or threatening upon them, who were so far from having received the *Holy Ghost*, that they had not believed in his divinity, or the divinity of the dispensation of God through him: our Lord seems to have considered them in a state of darkness, as those *who knew not what they did*: but he doubtless addressed himself, for the purpose of particular instruction to his disciples, who were believers, and who therefore could understand the doctrine of the

Holy Ghost, and the danger and penalty of sinning against him. This seems to be manifest from the distinction he makes, viz. between speaking or blaspheming against *the Son of man*, and speaking or blaspheming against the *Holy Ghost*. The unbelieving Jews only considered him as *Son of man*—they could therefore only speak against him *as such*: and their sin, of consequence, might be forgiven, according to the prayer which he afterwards made. But the disciples, who had more divinely believed, stood on different ground, and therefore he warned them of the danger of speaking against, blaspheming, or resisting in his acknowledged offices, the *Holy Ghost*; admonishing them, that all *other* sin and blasphemy might be forgiven; that those who ignorantly spoke against him as *Son of man*, might be forgiven, and all manner of sin and blasphemy might be forgiven, except the sin of those, who, being in the light and belief of his spiritual mission, as the *Holy Ghost*, should blaspheme against, and reproach, the messenger of their salvation. Neither was this an unnecessary admonition, since it appears (an humiliating lesson for all christian believers!) that an eminent disciple was, soon after, (notwithstanding

withstanding he had made professions of inviolable attachment) so near to blasphemy against his LORD and master, that he thrice *denied* him, and began to curse and to swear! But Peter went out, -and "wept bitterly:" he had indeed denied his being a disciple of JESUS, and *prophanely* denied it; but this was the *weakness* of human nature: he had not blasphemed against the heavenly nature and holy offices of JESUS, in his adorable character of the *Holy Ghost*: his sorrow was therefore accepted, and he experienced *forgiveness*.

With these distinctions in view, it may be profitable further to consider the danger of the sin against the *Holy Ghost*, among *believers* in christianity, in the present gospel-day; in which our solemn attention is called to a belief in, and a reception of, the *Holy Ghost*, as the heavenly minister and high-priest, in the church of GOD, for ever. It is not necessary for us to believe that all men, under a christian profession, are called to the same degree of eminence, in the experience of the light of the *Holy Ghost*, that the apostles, the immediate "ministers of the word," had: the contrary,

in the œconomy of God's government and providence, is most likely to be the fact; but since the promise of the assistance and heavenly agency of the *Holy Ghost*, is a christian and acknowledged doctrine; and all rational christian professors are the acknowledged subjects of such a divine ministration, according to their capacities, it follows, that they are solemnly called to a willing *reception* of the *Holy Ghost*, *since they have believed*.

Whosoever receiveth, and acknowledgeth this divine ministration, proportionably receiveth the means of, and the indispensable obligation to, obedience; and is so far advanced on his way towards the appointed refinement and perfection of his nature;—a refinement and perfection which *must* take place, through the divine œconomy of redemption and salvation, before men can be fit for an immortal state of purity and joy in another life. In proportion as they are illuminated in this, they receive a part in the “mystery of godliness;” the “unspeakable gift” of the *Holy Ghost*. If they have not, on account of their negligence and resistance, *so* received the *Holy Ghost*, according

cording to their capacities, (of which GOD is the only judge) and consequently have not profited by the privileges of heaven, they may seriously be assured, that so much the more of their refinement, and preparation for heaven, under the christian redemption, remains for them yet to experience, if ever they hope to be admitted to the joys of the just.

But these doctrinal hints being briefly, as I hope plainly, suggested; we will draw towards a conclusion, by inferring, that those who have received the *Holy Ghost*, and who, therefore, being enlightened by Him, and are fully made capable of sinning against Him *in this world*, are the persons most highly obligated to avoid the sin, which hath never *forgiveness* either in this world or that which is to come. GOD Almighty grant, that those who have so received, and are so far advanced in their capacity for endless comfort, may never become so fallen, as to speak a blasphemous word, or entertain a blasphemous sentiment, against their only teacher of heavenly wisdom, and their only deliverer from earthly trouble and sorrow, the *Holy Ghost* and Comforter,

forter, which was to come! But since even the best, and the highest, *may* fall; and since even "Lucifer, the son of the morning," fell; it is a possible thing, and to be devoutly guarded against, by continual "watching unto prayer," lest they sin the sin against the *Holy Ghost*, which never hath *forgiveness*.

But for some ray of comfort, under the possibility of so much calamity, we recur to our principle, of the divine justice being ever mingled with mercy; and to the unity of GOD's glorious attributes, tending to an ultimate redemption from all iniquity, and an universal consummation of happiness;—a theme answering to his own infinite goodness in creating man, and giving existence to numberless myriads of beings, capable, and to be made capable, of the interminable benefits of his kingdom!

Thus, even those who may have sinned the sin against the *Holy Ghost*, though they shall never have *forgiveness*, either in this world, or in the world to come; but, as unpardonable criminals, at the bar of the divine justice, must
be

be doomed to *suffer*, in time or in eternity;* yet, *having suffered*, according to the infinite perfection of that justice, attendant on which there is no *revenge*, they may return again, refined, to the long-forfeited privileges of their immortal nature.

To conclude my remarks on this subject: Those who can receive my belief, whether they be or be not satisfied with my reasoning, will not be dissatisfied with my freedom. Those who shall not be satisfied with either, I have at least not intentionally offended. And I am easy, under the full persuasion that nothing which I have said can possibly have a tendency to make rational beings less pious; or relax at all the restraints of the wicked: while I cannot but cheerfully hope, that every effort to disincumber religion of principles not supported by prophetic, christian, or apostolical documents, will have some friendly ten-

* I say in *time or in eternity*, because I hold it presumptuous to restrict the idea to eternity, when it is certain that severe punishments for sin have, in different ways, been inflicted on men in this world; and because it is possible with God to effect any thing, not involving a contradiction, in any way or period, consistent with his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

dency,

dency, in promoting the cause of present virtue, and eternal happiness.

The longer I read mankind, and the more I see of human imperfection, appertaining to every character; (among which religious presumption, and the arrogance of self-righteousness among sectaries, is not the least conspicuous;) the more am I persuaded that nothing short of the divine pardon in this, or a *purification* in another world, can be sufficient to fit the far greater part of professors for the innocence of angelick intercourse!

That pardon, and that mercifully proportioned refinement, can effect every thing great and glorious; and realize the ultimate harmony, when *sin shall be utterly destroyed; death and hell shall be no more; CHRIST shall deliver up his kingdom to the Father; and GOD shall be all in all.*

Having written what had occurred to me on this head, I submitted my MS. to the inspection of a learned and ingenious friend, who
happening

happening to be a well-wisher to the design, subjoined the following POSTSCRIPT; which the reader will perceive (for I give it entire) was designed to connect with the foregoing, as the production of the same hand. But I would not plume myself with the laurels of a man, whose justness of reasoning, and method of arrangement, while aiding the cause of pure divinity, would have done honour to the pen of Erasmus, or of Quintillian.

P O S T S C R I P T.

By way of Postscript it may not be improper to subjoin an argument or two, which, in my way of treating the subject, could not so well, connectedly, be produced in the body of the discourse. Nor let it displease the reader if they be brought in as some of *Bacon's* experiments, in his Natural Philosophy, "solitary." Though in truth they are more nearly relative than his experiments to the first topick.

First; I lay it down as a maxim to be doubted by few, and denied by none, that whosoever
doth

doth any thing, foreseeing the certain event thereof, willeth that event. If a parent send children into a wood, wherein grow poisonous berries, and *certainly know* that they *will* eat of them, it is of no importance in the consideration of common sense, that he cautions, forbids, forewarns, or that they, having free-will, *may* avoid the poison. Who will not accuse him of their death, in sending them into circumstances where he foreknew it would happen? GOD foreknows every thing. To his knowledge every thing is certain. Let us suppose HIM about to create twenty men. HE knows ten of them (or any number) will become vitious, therefore damned, thence inherit the unceasing penalty. Who doubts, in such a case, that HE *wills* the *end*, who being all-mighty, and all-knowing, does that without which it could not come to pass? But HE has sworn by HIMSELF, for HE could swear by no greater, that HE willeth not the death of him that dieth. That is, HE willeth it not finally, or simply as death, or destruction irrecoverable. And if it occur, it is a part of his œconomy of grace, a ministration unto life. For HE hath declared that his *will* is, that *all* should be *saved*.

Therefore

Therefore the doctrine which forges any other, contrary will, falsifies supreme unchangeable truth. And were not reason on my side, I say to all objecting reasoners, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." I need not add what a different view is presented from the doctrine I defend.

Secondly; I lay it down as another indubitable maxim, That whatsoever is done by a being of the divine attributes, is intended (by his goodness) conducted (by his wisdom) and accomplished (by his power) to a good end. Now all possible good ends may be enumerated under three words; *Honour, Pleasure, Benefit*. And every one to whom good can accrue from endless punishment, must be either *punisher, punished, or fellow-creature* to the *punished*. Let us try every one of the former three to each of the latter,

1. The *punisher*.—Would it be a greater *honour* to the *punisher* to have his creatures miserable than happy? I will venture to say, by proxy, for every heart, "No." Would it be

be greater *pleasure*? “No.” And *benefit* to HIM can be none.

2. *Punished*.—Endless punishment can be neither *honour*, *pleasure*, nor *benefit*, to them. Though punishment, on my scheme, will be of endless benefit.

3. *The fellow-creatures*.—It will be as *honourable* to them as to have one of their family hanged. If they have *pleasure* in it, they must have a diabolical heart, and must by the just Searcher of hearts be committed to the place prepared for the devil and his angels. *Benefit* they can have none: except *safety*. And that is fully answered by the great gulph, by *confinement* till reformation.

As then unceasing torments can answer no possible good end to any one in the universe, I conclude them to be neither the will nor work of God. Could I suppose them, I must believe them to be inflicted by a wantonness or cruelty, which words cannot express, nor heart conceive.

But

But let this be the comfort of every humble soul,—Known unto GOD are all his works; the Judge of all shall do right; and HE ordereth all things well. It hath pleased HIM to *reconcile all things* to HIMSELF. Therefore to HIM shall bow every knee; and *every* tongue shall say, “In the LORD *I* have strength, and “*I* have righteousness.”

THE foregoing dissertation I will suppose to have been audibly read in a circle of friends, who had met for the purpose of conversing on moral and useful subjects: that they soon found themselves equally divided in their opinions about it: that two of them thought the writer a well-meaning man, who had argued his subject with candour and piety; and the others, that he was a sceptick, and little better than an infidel: at least that he had written with no good design, and that such writings were dangerous.

My two advocates, whom I shall distinguish by the names of *Amicus* and *Frater*, sincerely
 thinking

thinking better of my morals, and my love of truth, soon drew the others into a *Dialogue* on the subject; which, as it may not be wholly uninteresting to my other readers, I shall here introduce a part of, under the title of

A S H O R T

DIALOGUE OF THE LIVING,

before I proceed to DIALOGUES IN THE WORLD OF SPIRITS.—The names of the opposite parties were, *Clamator* and *Timidus*.

A S H O R T

A SHORT
DIALOGUE
OF THE
LIVING.

AMICUS.

I Cannot, my friends, readily apprehend the ground of your hasty objections: but I should be glad, and so I conclude would *Frater*, if you would coolly state your objections, and let us judge of them.

FRATER.

I certainly should be glad; and freedom of communication is the professed purpose of our meeting.

CLAMATOR.

What *Timidus* may have to object on my side of this important question, I cannot say; but for my part, I think little need be said
to

to prove that this writer's sentiments are too freely expressed, be the doctrine he holds true or false.

TIMIDUS.

Indeed I think so ; but I would not hastily condemn him, after the serious declarations which we have heard from him, of his religious design.

AMICUS.

That, *Timidus*, is candid, and worthy of a christian.

FRATER.

Certainly. I hope we shall converse with temper, and give an absentee all deserved attention. Indeed the subject is now our own, and we must treat it according to the freedom of our own opinions.

CLAMATOR.

Well, then, my friends; what think you, what can you think, of a system that contradicts, at once, the whole tenor of scripture;
makes

makes a nose of wax of the doctrine of immortality; and does away the use of all admonition to sinners, on the principle of eternal punishment?

TIMIDUS.

True: I cannot, *Amicus*, see how you will reconcile so much violation of sacred truths, with the character of a christian!

FRATER.

But, gentlemen, I am sorry to hear you begin your objections in so censorious a style; I see no cause for *you* to be thus alarmed; and I am persuaded that if the ANGELS, that be in Heaven, were privy to the controversy, their happiness would not be lessened by fear of consequences from the writer's opinion; but I humbly conceive they would rather rejoice.

AMICUS.

I am sure, my brother ***** , I rejoice in having so able, and serious a coadjutor, upon this occasion. And we may fairly presume that our subject will support us; which, in re-

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I

ligious

ligious disquisition, is the greatest advantage of all. But our object not being conquest, or the display of logical argument, I shall endeavour, from a better motive, to keep close to the objections which *Clamator* has made.

Those objections are not *new*; so far from it, they are the common ones, by which most people begin and end their controversy, on that side of the subject. But it is the unhappiness of you, gentlemen, to have begun by falling into the common error—to have begun by begging the question—taking, for true principles, those points which have been only arbitrary deductions; and which, had you attended to the foregoing arguments, you would have seen *they* were intended to disprove. And unless you shew, that the opinions you hold against the writer, have not been disproved, or have not been shewn to abound with far greater difficulties than their opposites, it will become you to treat him with christian charity and respect. I dare say that is all he would wish at your hands, and that principally for *your* advantage; for he seems to be a man of a disinterested independant spirit, who has neither fears to embarrass

embarrass him, nor ambition of party applause to gratify.

Clamator says, a "system which contradicts "the tenor of scripture." Now the writer of the *Dissertation* makes it a main point to shew, that the original meaning, and tenor, of the scripture are repugnant to the idea of unceasing torments: that the idea existed not in the times before the gospel; and that the Author of the Gospel, and those whom he inspired, taught no such thing. They taught the doctrine of *future punishment*, as certainly as they taught that of future blessedness; as certainly as they taught that of "life and immortality," which was "brought to light by the gospel." But he contends, from gospel authority and analogy, that the most serious and positive terms which are used in scripture, to describe punishment, not only require a limited sense, but that any other sense is incompatible with JESUS CHRIST's delivering up his kingdom to his Father, when *death and hell shall be no more*.

As to the charge of making "a nose of wax "of the doctrine of immortality," that is a

charge of mere sound; and sound, too, of a reproachful kind; for if, as he contends, and as I also presume will be found to be true, the origin and consonance of scripture doctrine are *against* the interpretation of *endless torment*; it follows, that those who *give* such a sense to the scripture are the persons who make its doctrine "a nose of wax;" and while they wrest and pervert it to their own purposes, are either ignorantly, or intentionally, perverting the testimony of the Almighty himself!

With regard to "doing away the use of admonition to sinners, on the principle of "eternal (*unceasing*) punishment;" let me ask, Do *you* know by what means to admonish sinners to reformation and virtue, better than INFINITE wisdom himself? Do *you* think that a principle is true, in the unchangeability of the DIVINE NATURE; and yet that such a principle must be shaded and disguised by human policy, in order to secure to man the ends of the divine government and blessing?

TIMIDUS.

TIMIDUS.

But this, my friend, with submission, seems to be little less than begging the question on that side: *Clamator* and I do not allow that such a charge *can* lie against us. We contend that the DIVINITY *hath* taught, and *hath* exhorted to teaching and admonition, by the seriousness of *endless* punishment: and so long as we say no more than He hath thought proper to say, we are exempt from all presumption in the matter; we stand supported by the highest authority.

CLAMATOR.

That is the point; and we will not fear an *imputed* consequence, so long as we only repeat what the scripture says; it must be presumption, and surely a *sinful* one, for any finite and ignorant being to attempt an alteration in the *terms* and the *mode* of teaching heavenly terrors. I had rather be on the side of divine example, than run the risque of so awful an innovation in divinity, be your human construction of language ever so plausible. Moreover, I have a persuasion very strong in my mind, and so I

perfume has every accountable man, in his, from *terror*—that the doctrine of eternal judgment is not to be trifled with.

AMICUS.

All this, my friends, is at least strong declamation, by which you continue to evade the great fact, that divine language does *not* express *your* sense of divine threatenings; nor is it more certain that divine policy ever gave a sanction to it. The contrary is most clear, and has all the advantage of a consonance with the revealed origin, progress, and end, of the divine œconomy; and the powerful evidence from nature and grace, of the divine goodness. *Clamator* appeals to internal evidence, of the *terror* of the human heart. I will meet that argument willingly. Recollect, both of you, as well as you can, your first impressions of religion: what were your first feelings and apprehensions about *endless torment* being the portion of the wicked? or (to come to common expressions) the never-ending torments of the *fire of hell*?—You look one on the other, and seem to change countenance; and I wonder
not

not that you should. Did you, or did you not, *first* conceive of it, in childhood, (when perhaps you were too young to relieve yourselves by reflection) without losing something of your love and reverence towards the God who made you? You pause: but—we are all serious, as becomes us: answer me truly as you can.

TIMIDUS.

I cannot say, truly, that I did.

CLAMATOR.

To be sure my first, childish apprehensions, (if *they* can possibly affect the argument) were not in favour of my present sentiments; but I do not think I am warranted in concluding from thence, that I was most right in the weakness of childhood: that would be a vague kind of argument on any subject; and the apostle, who says, that “when he was a child he spake
“as a child, and thought as a child; but that
“when he became a man he put away childish
“things,”—sets the matter beyond a doubt, that the notions of children are of small account.

AMICUS.

AMICUS.

A word, by the way, to that point. The apostle was not then literally speaking of his natural childhood—for he had outwardly become a man before he put away, in a religious sense, childish things. Few men had been more childish in errors, and weak apprehensions of religion, before he was miraculously converted to greater knowledge. He considered his whole life, previous to his conversion, as childhood, in which (though he afterwards said, in respect of his *sincerity*, “I have lived “in all good conscience until this day;”) he knew not what it was to be “a man in CHRIST “JESUS.” And this, by the bye, though wandering a little from our point, may serve to admonish us, that childishness, in religious faith, is not inseparable from outward manhood. Remember, my opponents, *that* hint—and then tell me further: Do you think that there ever was a sensible child in the world, who was early told of his Creator’s infliction of *unceasing torments* upon sinners, without feeling such impressions as you confess?

CLAMATOR.

CLAMATOR.

Perhaps not.

TIMIDUS.

I suppose there never was.

AMICUS.

And, ever since *you* have been able to reason on the subject, unto this day, have your infant impressions been wholly eradicated? or, independantly of *your* sense of supposed scripture doctrine, and the commentaries of divines, do you *now* feel yourselves naturally, or rationally, or divinely, fatisfied, that *such* a punishing will, or attribute, exists in the adorable fountain of wisdom, love, and grace?

CLAMATOR.

That is not, surely, a pertinent question; our finite minds cannot comprehend infinite attributes, and therefore our mere persuasions can be no test of truth.

TIMIDUS.

TIMIDUS.

Certainly not: we must guard religiously against arguing from such premises, else confusion would never have an end.

FRATER.

I think, in part, as you do; but (without meaning to take the business out of a good hand) I presume that *Amicus* will not be driven to the necessity of laying his main stress upon your confessions: and yet, what is there to be reckoned stronger in religious affairs, than the secret, spontaneous, uniform evidence of the mind, through our whole lives?

AMICUS.

I do not mean to lay such a stress on those confessions as *might* be laid, were arguments wanting in number and force, which now we have so fully to our purpose; but, as *Frater* very justly observes, much reason seems to be derived from your ingenuous acknowledgments, why *you* should not be censorious on the writer of the Dissertation: you believe, or you do not believe, the doctrine of *unceasing torments*, and
their

their application to those who die in a state of unrepented, or unatoned, sin; *i. e.* to all who are not received into everlasting bliss. For the system you attempt to defend admits of no medium or qualification of the alternative; to suppose a medium, or any *conditional* escape after death, would overturn your principles. If you say you do believe it, you believe against the evidence of your own minds, without being able to prove any command upon you so to do; but I acquit you of the inconsistency; for, so circumstanced, you *cannot* be in a state of belief, to the point. If you do *not* believe, and can adduce no fair reason why another should believe what you *cannot*; why do you contend for the promulgation of that which is confessedly uncertain, and most probably false?

CLAMATOR.

I do not wish, and am confident my friend *Timidus* does not, to *add* any thing to the sense of divine revelation; we should both, I am sure, be presumptuous in so doing; but I cannot, after all which is contained in the *Dissertation*, believe that JESUS CHRIST and his apostles
would

would have denounced judgment, in an eternal sense, so fully; and that so much should have been said by pious divines, for the inforcement of what they believed to be the gospel method of teaching, viz. by the threatenings of *endless* torment for sin, if it were not divinely intended that men *should be taught*, in that sense, to fear the judgments of God: neither can I think that wicked men would be so fully deterred, on your and the writer's plan of interpretation, from continuing in sin, and becoming more abandoned, in a course of wickedness!

TIMIDUS.

That, at least, *Amicus*, seems a very obvious truth, and we should be extremely cautious how we weaken the motives to virtue.

AMICUS.

Strengthen them, *Timidus*, by every true—by every worthy—by every persuasive argument. Heaven forbid that we should *weaken* them. You seem as though both of you would confess, with regard to yourselves, that the belief of the doctrine you contend for is not essential

to

to making *you* religious; but that such a belief may be necessary for *others*, whom therefore you must consider as differently constituted; or inferior in their susceptibility of motives, to order and happiness. "The vulgar must be taught and deterred after a more vulgar way." This is no uncommon notion; but in my opinion a very arrogant one, and very unworthy of any man, who would ascribe moral fitness, force, beauty, and a supreme excellence, to *truth*, rather than to *falsehood*: very unworthy of any man who would not wilfully pervert his Maker's authority and wisdom, and fashion His plan of salvation, according to his own little cunning, and short-sighted policy. But the true, unchangeable, and undefiled religion of Almighty God, hath been perverted and misrepresented by the forwardness, and various contrivance of man, through almost all ages: perversion of truth has been the cause of error, and infidelity and wantonness have been the consequences.

Infidelity is not confined, as some people seem to think, to the more learned speculatists in divinity and science. It is found among the illiterate;

illiterate; and though they have not philosophy enough to reason themselves into confusion upon *matter* and *spirit*, and get into difficulties about the *source of volition*, or *eternal power*; they are very commonly infidels respecting the doctrine now before us: *endless* duration of torment strikes their rational minds as too monstrous to be true; and finding themselves called upon by priests, and by erroneous interpretations of the bible, to believe it, they revolt from the idea, or perhaps ridicule it; and hence, I fear, too often, learn a kind of contempt for things spiritual. So far, in my opinion, is the doctrine, which you wish to contend for, from having a general good effect, that it seems to be in itself a frequent cause of weakening the interests of religion.

Would men confine themselves, in exhorting by punishment, to the principle of *continual* misery, for a season, always awfully and divinely proportioned to the *degree* of sin and transgression: would they earnestly teach that such a punishment is not what the Supreme Being wills to inflict; but that there is a necessity in the nature of the thing, for our suffering

fering the penalty of sin, in order that we may be made free,—the long painful purification in order that we may be *made* pure; and be fitted, through punishment, if we will not fit ourselves through obedience, for the good and virtuous society of angels; (all which is the true scripture faith :) we might hope to see a rational, and effectual impression, often made; and the authority and goodness of GOD more generally acknowledged. But this is not enough for the zeal and wisdom of man; and from them much *mischief* insues. The *good* that can arise may be better comprehended, when it shall be shewn that a *terrified* mind, and a truly *religious* one, are synonymous!

As to what *Clamator* has argued, from the concurrent practice of divines to instruct by the terrors of unceasing punishment; I would observe, that all the opposition, and errors of doctrine, which have existed in the church, have been the invention of divines,* or the

* I do not mean by this remark to cast any reflection on a particular class of men, against whom I have no ill-will: they have *necessarily* treated on the subject in question: some of them have proceeded according to their best opinion, under the influence of their prejudices and fears. I wish others among them had been more attentive to the simplicity of truth, than to interest and system.

fruits of their erroneous construction of scripture truths. Therefore, from *their* practice, nothing conclusive can be inferred in a matter of so much importance. And as to the repetition about the declarations of the New Testament, *that* has been sufficiently spoken to already: it has been contended, and must ever be contended, that endless torment is an unscriptural and unsupported notion. That it is unscriptural, as to an infinite and positive sense; that the terms *eternal* and *everlasting* are not necessarily predicated of endless duration: but that they have an acknowledged different import in various places, I shall further endeavour to put beyond a doubt, and conclude this Dialogue by subjoining a few quotations from different authorities.

QUOTA-

Q U O T A T I O N S

• N T H E

F O R M E R S U B J E C T.

THE words αἰῶν, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα; εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας, &c. do signify any remarkable period of duration, whether it be of life, or dispensation, or polity. So *Heb.* i. 8: "Thy Throne, O GOD," (viz. JESUS CHRIST) "is for ever and ever:" and yet he is at last to give up the kingdom to GOD, &c.

See N. B. prefaced to Bp. WILSON'S Notes on the New Testament.

' I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an *everlasting possession.*'

Gen. xvii. 8.

" *Everlasting possession.* This must be understood according to the capacity of the subject;
VOL. III. K " sometimes

“sometimes for a perpetual duration; sometimes for a certain number of years, according to GOD’s appointment or purpose.”

Bp. WILSON.

‘Unto the utmost bounds of the *everlasting hills.*’

Gen. xlix. 26.

“The blessings promised unto thy father, and my fore-elders, go mightily after the desire of the *highest in the world.*”

COVERDALE.

“The Jewish statutes and ordinances are filed αἰωνίως, and said to be εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, in the following places as they are enumerated by Mr. *Whiston*. Exod. xxvii. 21.—xxviii. 43.—xxix. 28.—xxx. 21.—xxxi. 16. Lev. vi. 18, 22.—vii. 24, 26.—x. 15.—xvi. 29, 31.—xvii. 7.—xxiii. 14.—xxxi. 41.—xxiv. 3, 8, 9. Numb. x. 8.—xv. 15.—xviii. 8, 19, 24.—xix. 10.—xxv. 13. ‘There is no end of citing more *ordinances, or statutes, or grants,* which

“ which were to be *eternal*, or *everlasting*, or to
 “ last *for ever*, in our modern way of inter-
 “ preting those Greek words, which yet were
 “ to last no longer, at the utmost, than the
 “ Mosaic economy itself; and have many, very
 “ many, of them ceased, or at least have been
 “ intermitted above sixteen hundred years !”

Etern. of Hell Term. consid.

“ That the *precise duration* of the words *αιων*
 “ and *αιωνιος*, in any particular place, cannot,
 “ with certainty, be collected from the force of
 “ the words in themselves simply considered;
 “ but must be determined, either by the nature
 “ of the thing spoken of, or other passages of
 “ scripture that explain it. As, to illustrate
 “ this, in a few instances, when it is said of
 “ GOD, as in *Rom. xvi. 26*, that he is *Θεος*
 “ *αιωνιος*, we cannot argue that His duration
 “ is *boundless* and unlimited, merely because
 “ the epithet *αιωνιος* is applied to Him. But
 “ we may reasonably construe it in this sense,
 “ because he is *previously known* to be a Being
 “ capable of this kind of duration; and the
 “ word *αιων* allows of the construction, as it

“ naturally signifies *an age, or period of duration*
 “ *in general*, leaving the circumstance of *longer*
 “ *or shorter, definite or indefinite*, to be settled by
 “ the nature of the subject with which it is
 “ connected.

“ The same may be said with respect to the
 “ *happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the*
 “ *wicked*; they can neither of them be certainly
 “ fixed to *this or that precise duration*, whether
 “ *longer or shorter, limited or unlimited*, MERELY
 “ from the joining the word αἰωνιος with them;
 “ because this word properly signifies a *period of*
 “ *duration*, without taking into its meaning its
 “ *precise length*, or determining whether it is
 “ *bounded or unbounded*.

“ In order therefore to fix the *true duration*
 “ intended by this *epithet*, thus applied, we must
 “ recur to the *nature of the subject*, or what
 “ may be said with reference to it in *other texts*;
 “ nor can it, with any manner of certainty, be
 “ done in any other way: though I would
 “ observe here, and the observation may be
 “ worthy of special notice; if we will confine
 “ ourselves to the *mere force of the word itself*,
 “ it

“ it more probably means a *limited*, than an
 “ *endless*, duration ; and for this very good rea-
 “ son, because *this* is, by far, the most *frequent*
 “ use of it in the sacred writings ; as any one
 “ may soon satisfy himself by the help of a
 “ Greek Concordance.

“ And from hence it appears, at once, that
 “ the scripture account of the *future misery* as
 “ *everlasting*, is no ways inconsistent with the
 “ foregoing scheme of *universal salvation* : nay,
 “ from the proof above offered, that mankind
 “ *universally* shall be *saved*, we are clearly and
 “ certainly taught how to understand the word
 “ *αιωνιος*, when joined with the *future misery*,
 “ namely, as meaning, not an *unlimited*, but
 “ *limited* duration. For, as this word is evi-
 “ dently found, in fact, to be capable of being
 “ understood in either of these senses, it is now
 “ put out of all doubt, in which of them it is
 “ to be understood, namely, in the *limited* sense.
 “ To illustrate this by an example. It is said
 “ of CHRIST, *Dan. vii. 14*, that *his dominion*
 “ *is an everlasting dominion* ; and again, *Mic.*
 “ *iv. 7*, that *he shall reign in Mount Zion from*
 “ *henceforth even for ever*.

"The words *αιωνιος*, and *εις τον αιωνα*, in
 "the Septuagint, in themselves simply confi-
 "dered, do not absolutely determine, whether
 "the reign of CHRIST shall be *endless*, or for
 "a *period*, or *dispensation* only: but when an in-
 "spired apostle expressly declares, that after the
 "reduction of all enemies, CHRIST *shall de-*
 "*liver up the kingdom to the Father, and be him-*
 "*self subject to him, that GOD may be all in all;*
 "the precise meaning of these words is *now*
 "*fixed*, and we are no longer at a loss to say,
 "that they are to be understood of a *limited*
 "duration, though a long one. So, when it
 "is affirmed of the wicked, that they *shall go*
 "*away, εις κολασιν αιωνιον, into everlasting*
 "*punishment*, the certain meaning of this word,
 "*αιωνιον, everlasting*, is clearly and fully settled
 "by the above proof of the *final salvation of all*
 "*men*. We are no longer left in suspense, but
 "may assuredly say, it is to be understood in
 "the *limited* sense."

SALV. OF ALL MEN.

"Could it be proved, that the *fire* itself will
 "be absolutely *without end*, it will not neces-
 "sarily

"sarily follow from thence, that *every indivi-*
 " *dual subject*, which is cast into it, must be so
 " too: because God may either think fit to
 " *continue this fire* in being, as a *perpetual monu-*
 " ment of his justice; or because, in so large
 " a system of rational beings as the *universe*
 " contains, there may be, as well in *future ages*
 " as in the *present*, beings that abuse their moral
 " agency, and become proper subjects to be
 " punished in it. I say, either of these propo-
 " sitions may be true, and, as such, sufficiently
 " account for this phraseology (if understood
 " in its utmost rigour) and yet no necessity of
 " inferring, that *every individual subject*, that is
 " cast into this fire, shall be *continued alive in it*
 " *without end.*"

NICHOL SCOT.

" It may be of more importance to remark,
 " that there is no good reason to suppose, that
 " the word *aiwviov*, *everlasting*, here joined with
 " the *fire of hell*, is to be understood, as pointing
 " out a strictly and absolutely *endless duration*.
 " And, I believe, nothing but mere custom
 " prevents our perceiving, at once, the absur-
 " dity

" dity of such an interpretation. No one ever
 " imagined himself obliged to think, that this
 " *earth* will continue, strictly speaking, to all
 " *eternity*, because it is said, in scripture, to *abide*
 " *for ever*. No one ever supposed the *hills* and
 " *mountains* to be absolutely *endless in duration*,
 " because the term *everlasting* is applied to them
 " by the sacred writers. And, in fine, no one
 " ever imagined there had been an *eternal suc-*
 " *cession of prophets*, because the scripture speaks
 " of *prophets*, $\alpha\pi' \alpha\iota\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma$, *from eternity*. Com-
 " mon reason, in these cases, readily under-
 " stands the word *eternal* in the *limited* sense.
 " And the same reason, one would think, if
 " not under some previous bias, would as rea-
 " dily understand the *same word*, in the *same*
 " *sense*, in the *present case*. For it is, perhaps,
 " as great an absurdity to suppose *fire* to be
 " *strictly and absolutely eternal*, as to suppose the
 " *earth*, or *mountains*, or *prophets in succession*, to
 " be so. *Fire*, as such, naturally tends to an
 " *end*, and will, in time, actually come to an
 " *end*; and it is impossible, according to the
 " established laws of nature, but that it should
 " certainly do so. The *nature of the subject*
 " therefore obliges us to put a *limitation* on the
 " word

“ αἰώνιον, *everlasting*, when joined with *fire*.
 “ And this is so often the *sense* of this *same*
 “ *word*, in like cases, even in the scriptures
 “ themselves, that it is strange any should be
 “ at a loss in this matter. A *restrained* inter-
 “ pretation of the *word*, when connected with
 “ *fire*, is certainly the most natural, as well as
 “ rational. And I see not but an *age*, *dispensa-*
 “ *tion*, or *period*, for the *continuance* of this *fire*,
 “ will very well answer the full import of the
 “ word αἰώνιον, *everlasting*; especially, if we
 “ suppose this *age* to *last*, till the *fire* has accom-
 “ plished the *end*, for which it was enkindled.”

SALV. OF ALL MEN.

“ We know of no substances that will en-
 “ dure the force of fire without *dissolution*, in
 “ time. And as *fire* is that by which, in *those*
 “ *texts*, the *punishment* of the wicked is said to
 “ be effected, the *nature* of the *subject* obviously,
 “ and, I think, necessarily, leads us to conceive
 “ of this punishment as *everlasting*, not in the
 “ sense in which the scripture says that GOD is
 “ *everlasting*; but in the sense in which it says
 “ the *hills* are *everlasting*, and the *prophets* have
 “ been

"*been for everlasting, that is, for a limited du-*
 "*ration only.*" IBID.

"It is objected, that the word *αιωνιος*;
 "which is used to point out the *duration*
 "of the *future torments*, is the *very word*
 "which is used also to point out the *absolute*
 "*eternity of God*. But this criticism I take
 "to be of very little weight; infomuch that I
 "should not have mentioned it, but that I
 "have often heard, and seen, it urged in the
 "present controverfy. It might indeed be
 "mentioned to good purpose, could it be
 "shown, that the word *αιωνιος* is joined, in
 "scripture, with nothing but what is *strictly*
 "*eternal*: but, as it is otherwise in fact, this
 "remark can be of no real importance; be-
 "cause, if it proves any thing, it proves a great
 "deal too much. If the *punishment* of the
 "wicked must be *never-ending*, MERELY be-
 "cause the word *αιωνιος*, which is sometimes
 "joined with the word *God*, is joined with
 "that also; it will follow, as this same word
 "is joined with the *earth*, and *hills*, and *gene-*
 "*rations*, and *prophets*, that they must all of
 "them be *strictly and absolutely eternal*; the ab-
 "surdity

“furdity of which is too glaring not to be, at
 “once, perceived. The plain truth is, the
 “*nature of the subject* treated of, together with
 “*other scriptures*, must always be taken into
 “consideration, in order to fix the *precise*
 “*meaning* of this word, with any degree of
 “certainty.”

It is further objected, “The *misery* of the
 “wicked is not only said to be *everlasting*, but
 “FOR EVER; and, as though this was not
 “sufficiently expressive of its *endless continuance*,
 “it is further declared to be FOR EVER AND
 “EVER, the strongest phrase used, in scripture,
 “to describe the *proper eternity* of the Supreme
 “Being.”

MYST. HID FROM AGES.

A valuable author has the following reflections in a note upon *Psalms* xli. 13; “*Blessed*
 “*be the Lord GOD of Israel, from everlasting,*
 “*and to everlasting! Amen, and Amen.*” “I
 “am apt to think,” says he, “that many Eng-
 “lish readers suppose, that the words, *from*
 “*everlasting*, signify a duration that was *past* in
 “the days of the Psalmist. But, upon second
 “thoughts,

“ thoughts, the English reader will perceive,
 “ that this cannot possibly be. The Psalmist
 “ here expresses his desire, that GOD *may be*
 “ *blessed*. But it is impossible to desire, that
 “ GOD may be blessed *heretofore*. To say,
 “ *Blessed be GOD in past ages*, would be ridi-
 “ culous. The *text* then must be rendered,
 “ *Blessed be the Lord GOD of Israel FROM AGE*
 “ *TO AGE!* that is, from this time forth,
 “ throughout all ages. Every one will allow
 “ that the Hebrew word, *Olam*, here rendered
 “ *everlasting*, does frequently signify *an age*, or
 “ *generation*. Nor will any one object to this
 “ interpretation the word *AND; from everlasting*
 “ *AND to everlasting*, as if this would hinder
 “ us from rendering the expression, *from age to*
 “ *age*; when he shall consider, that the word
 “ *and*, in such-like expressions, is redundant,
 “ or superfluous, in our language, whatever
 “ grace it adds to the Hebrew phrase. Thus
 “ the Hebrew expression, 2 *Chron.* ix. 26, is
 “ literally to be rendered—*from the river and*
 “ *unto the land of the Philistines*. Our transla-
 “ tors have rendered the Hebrew particle by,
 “ *even;—from the river even unto the land of*
 “ *the Philistines*. It would have been as
 “ well

“ well if they had dropt it quite, and had
 “ said, *from the river to the land of the Phi-*
 “ *listines*. See also 2 Chron. xxx. 5. So the
 “ passage of the Psalm now under considera-
 “ tion may be rendered, *Blessed be GOD, from*
 “ *age even to age*, or, more simply, *from age to*
 “ *age*. In the same sense the expression is to
 “ be understood, Psalm ciii. 17. *The mercy of*
 “ *the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting*, or
 “ rather, *from age to age*; that is, from this age to
 “ the next, and so on throughout all future ages”

HALLETT'S *Notes on pecul. Texts.*

“ Enough, I trust, has now been said, to
 “ make it sufficiently evident, that the doctrine
 “ of *universal salvation* may be admitted as a
 “ *scripture-truth*, notwithstanding the *objected*
 “ *phraseologies*, in favour of *never-ceasing misery*,
 “ with respect to *wicked men*, as a contradic-
 “ tion thereto. Did the *scripture* contain no-
 “ thing that might be thought to countenance
 “ the opinion of *final universal happiness*, there
 “ would be good reason, as we have seen, to
 “ think, that the *future torments* would have an
 “ end: but it is much more reasonable to be-
 “ lieve this, while we take into the argument
 “ the

" the *above proof of this doctrine*; because, so
 " far as it carries with it any *real weight*, it
 " ought to be looked upon as a *good reason*,
 " why we should understand *those phrases* in a
 " *limited*, and not an *endless*, sense, which are
 " capable of either.

" I shall now finish my reply to this *first*
 " *objection*, with the following *general remarks*,
 " which, perhaps, may not be altogether un-
 " worthy of notice.

" It does not appear to me, that it would be
 " honourable to the infinitely righteous and
 " benevolent Governor of the world, to make
 " wicked men *everlastingly miserable*. For, in
 " what point of light soever we take a view of
 " *sin*, it is certainly, in its nature, a *finite evil*.
 " It is the fault of a *finite creature*, and the
 " effect of *finite principles*, passions, and ap-
 " petites. To say, therefore, that the sinner
 " is doomed to *infinite misery* for the *finite faults*
 " of a *finite life*, looks like a reflection on the
 " *infinite justice*, as well as goodness, of God.
 " I know it has been often urged, that *sin* is
 " an *infinite evil*, because committed against an
 " *infinite*

" *infinite object*; for which reason, an *infinite*
 " *punishment* is no more than its *due desert*. But
 " this *metaphysical nicety* proves a great deal too
 " much, if it proves any thing at all. For, ac-
 " cording to this way of arguing, all sinners
 " must suffer *to the utmost* in *degree*, as well as
 " *duration*; otherwise, they will not suffer *so*
 " much as they *might* do, and as they *ought* to
 " do: which is plainly inconsistent with that
 " *difference* the scripture often declares there
 " shall be in the punishment of wicked men,
 " according to the *difference* there has been in
 " the *nature* and *number* of their evil deeds.

" The *smallness* of the *difference* between
 " those, in this world, to whom the character
 " of *wicked* belongs in the *lowest* sense, and
 " those to whom the character of *good* is ap-
 " plicable in the *like* sense, renders it incredible,
 " that such an *amazingly great difference* should
 " be made between them in the *future* world.
 " The *former* differ from the latter, by a dif-
 " ference, as to us, so *imperceptible*, that it is,
 " perhaps, impossible we should be able so
 " much as to distinguish the *one* from the *other*,
 " with any manner of certainty: and yet the
 " *difference*

“ *difference* between them, in the other world,
“ according to the common opinion, will be
“ *doubly infinite*; for the *good* are screened from
“ *infinite misery*, and rewarded with *infinite hap-*
“ *piness*; whereas the *wicked* are excluded from
“ *infinite happiness*, and doomed to *infinite misery*.
“ For the *reward* and *punishment*, being both
“ *eternal*, however *small* they may be supposed
“ to be in each finite portion of time, they
“ must at last become infinite in magnitude.
“ How to reconcile this with the absolutely
“ accurate *impartiality* of GOD, is, I confess,
“ beyond me.

“ A very great part of those, who will be
“ miserable in the *other world*, were not, that
“ we know of, INCURABLY sinful in *this*.
“ Multitudes are taken off before they have
“ had opportunity to make themselves *har-*
“ *dened, abandoned* sinners: and, so far as we are
“ able to judge, had they been continued in
“ life, they might have been formed to a *vir-*
“ *tuous temper* of mind by a suitable mixture of
“ *correction, instruction*, and the like. And can
“ it be supposed, with respect to such, that an
“ infinitely benevolent GOD, without *any other*
“ *trial*;

“ *trial*, in order to effect their reformation,
 “ will consign them over to *endless* and *irrever-*
 “ *sible* torment? Would this be to conduct
 “ himself towards them like a *Father*? Let
 “ the heart of a *father on earth* speak upon this
 “ occasion. Nay, it does not appear, that *any*
 “ *sinners* are so INCORRIGIBLE in wickedness,
 “ as to be *beyond recovery* by still further methods
 “ within the reach of *infinite wisdom*: and if
 “ the infinitely wise GOD can, in any wise
 “ methods, recover them, even in *any other state*
 “ of *trial*, may we not argue, from his *infinite*
 “ *benevolence*, that he will? And is it not far
 “ more reasonable to suppose, that the *miseries*
 “ of the *other world* are a *proper discipline* in
 “ order to accomplish this *end*, than that they
 “ should be *final* and *vindictive* only?

“ The *smallness* of the number of those who
 “ shall be *saved*, in the *next state*, ought, in all
 “ reason, to be esteemed a weighty argument
 “ against interpreting any texts of scripture so
 “ as to mean absolutely *eternal misery*. It is a
 “ plain case, if the *next state* be *final*, but very
 “ *few*, comparatively, of the sons of Adam will
 “ be *saved*. Our SAVIOUR himself has said,
 VOL. III. L “ *Matth.*

“ *Matth. vii. 14, Strait is the gate, and narrow*
 “ *is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there*
 “ *be that find it. Nor will there be any room*
 “ *left to contrive shifts to elude the obvious*
 “ *natural sense of these words, if we consider*
 “ *the necessary qualifications in order to the find-*
 “ *ing this life, and then compare the character*
 “ *of mankind herewith. The chosen, and faith-*
 “ *ful, and true, though in the world, are not of*
 “ *the world, but a peculiar and separate people.*
 “ *The whole world lieth in wickedness. It does*
 “ *so at this day; as we ourselves know, and*
 “ *cannot but know, if we do not shut our eyes*
 “ *against the light. So it has done in the ages*
 “ *that are past, if we may believe the inspired*
 “ *writers of scripture. And so it will do in*
 “ *the ages that are yet to come, if the same sacred*
 “ *penmen may be depended on: for they assure*
 “ *us, that the earth that now is, with its inha-*
 “ *bitants and works, are kept in store, and re-*
 “ *served unto fire, for the ungodliness, and infi-*
 “ *delity, and unrighteousness, which, in future*
 “ *times, shall be universally prevalent.*

“ *Now, if a few only of mankind, in the*
 “ *final issue of things, are to be saved, and the*
 “ *rest*

“ *damned*, that is, sentenced to endure *never-*
 “ *ending torments in hell*, what a strange idea must
 “ we have of the MERCY of the *Christian* dis-
 “ pensation, which is so celebrated, in the New
 “ Testament writings, for its *unsearchable riches*
 “ and *glory*? The *birth* of JESUS, the Saviour,
 “ into the world is spoken of as *glad tidings of*
 “ *great joy to all people*, and an anthem of praise
 “ was sung, on this account, by the heavenly
 “ host, to GOD, because of the *good-will* hereby
 “ discovered towards mankind. But if the
 “ greater part of mankind by far will *eternally*
 “ *perish in hell*, notwithstanding the incarnation
 “ of the Son of GOD, and all that he has ever
 “ suffered, or done, or will do, for their relief,
 “ what occasion was there for such *universal*
 “ *joy*? And with what propriety could *glory*
 “ be given to GOD for his *good-will* towards
 “ men? The *total ruin* of such multitudes of
 “ the sons of Adam appears to me a most pal-
 “ pable *inconsistency* with the *grace* of GOD as
 “ exhibited in the *gospel* of CHRIST. And it
 “ is indeed *incredible* in itself, that GOD should
 “ constitute his *Son* the Saviour of *men*, and
 “ the *bulk* of them be *finally* and *eternally* *damned*.
 “ Nor can it be any other than a base and gross

“ reflection on the *Saviour of men*, whose pro-
 “ per business and office, as such, it is, to defeat
 “ the design of the *Devil*, and rescue mankind
 “ out of his *destroying* hands; I say, it cannot
 “ but reflect great dishonour on him to sup-
 “ pose, that the *Devil*, notwithstanding his
 “ *mediatory interposition*, and all that he could
 “ do in opposition to him, should *finally* get the
 “ better of him, by effecting the *everlasting*
 “ *damnation* of the *greater part* of those whom
 “ he came from heaven on purpose to *save*.
 “ To me, I own, the thought is shocking; nor
 “ can I see how it is possibly *reconcilable* with
 “ the *honour* that is due to CHRIST, in his
 “ character as the *Saviour of men*. The con-
 “ sideration of *hell* as a *purging fire** is that only
 “ which can make the matter sit easy upon
 “ one’s mind.

* Mr. Hartley, as I think, very justly observes, “ The doctrine
 “ of *purgatory*, as now taught by the *Papists*, seems to be a *cor-*
 “ *ruption* of a *genuine doctrine*, held by the *ancient fathers*, con-
 “ cerning a *purifying fire*. It may, perhaps, be, that the *absolute*
 “ *eternity* of punishment was not received, till after the introduc-
 “ tion of metaphysical subtleties, relating to *time*, *eternity*, &c.
 “ and the ways of expressing these: that is, not till after the
 “ *pagan philosophy*, and *vain deceit*, had mixed itself with, and cor-
 “ rupted, *Christianity*.” Hartley’s *Obser. on Man*, vol. ii. p. 429.

“ In

" In fine, it ought to be particularly remem-
 " bered and considered, that the *proper tendency*,
 " and *final cause*, of *evils* and *sufferings*, in this
 " *present state*, are to do us *good*, in the *natural*,
 " or *moral* sense, or both. They are a suitably
 " adapted *mean* to this *end*; and the all-wise
 " merciful Governor of the world makes use
 " of them as such. This is the voice of *rea-*
 " *son*, confirmed by observation and experience;
 " and the *scripture* concurs herewith in speak-
 " ing of the *punishments*, *evils*, or *sufferings*,
 " which it pleases God to bring upon the sons
 " of men, as a *proper discipline* in order to *hum-*
 " *ble*, and *prove*, and *do them good* in their latter
 " *end*. The texts to this purpose are scattered
 " all over the Bible. And we have such an
 " observable passage as that, *Psa. lxxxix. 31,*
 " *32, 33. If his children forsake my law, and*
 " *walk not in my judgments; if they break my*
 " *statutes, and keep not my commandments; then*
 " *will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and*
 " *their iniquity with stripes.* NEVERTHELESS,
 " MY LOVING-KINDNESS WILL I NOT UT-
 " TERLY TAKE FROM THEM. Whether these
 " words are spoken of the *children of David*,
 " or of the *children of CHRIST*, of whom *David*

" was an illustrious *type*, the *loving-kindness* of
 " GOD is represented as *finally prevailing to-*
 " *wards them.* And his *visiting their transgres-*
 " *sions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes,*
 " is spoken of as the *mean*, in a way of *disci-*
 " *pline, correction, or chastisement,* in order to
 " promote this end. And if *evil, punishment,*
 " or *misery*, in the *present life*, be mercifully in-
 " tended for the *good* of the *patients themselves,*
 " why not in the next life? Is the character
 " of GOD, as the *Father of mercies*, and GOD
 " of *pity and grace*, limited to *this world only?*
 " Why should it not be supposed, that the in-
 " finitely benevolent Deity is the *same good being*
 " in the *other world*, that he is in *this?* And
 " that he has the *same kind and good intention* in
 " the *punishments* of the *next state*, that he has
 " in this, namely, the *profit, or advantage*, of
 " the *sufferers themselves.* This is certainly
 " most agreeable to the *natural notions* we en-
 " tertain of the *only good GOD*: and it is most
 " agreeable also to the ideas, which the scrip-
 " tures give us of Him. For they represent
 " his *mercy* under the emblem of the *tendrest*
 " *passion* in men, that of a *father's pity towards*
 " *his children*; yea, they describe it by speaking
 " of

" of Him, as *afflicted with us in our afflictions,*
 " and as *grieved at the heart for the miseries of*
 " *Israel.* And why should not these represen-
 " tations of the *mercy of God* be extended to
 " the *future world?* Why should He not be
 " looked upon as *pitying sinners,* and *punishing*
 " them, in the *next state* as well as this, in
 " order to their *benefit?* Surely a change in
 " the *mode,* and *place,* of wicked men's existence,
 " will not infer a change in the *nature* of that
 " God, who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and*
 " *for ever,* and must, in the *other world* as well
 " as *this,* be disposed to make it evident, that
 " he is a being of *boundless and inexhaustible*
 " *goodness.*

" It may be worthy of our special notice
 " here, not only the language of mankind, in
 " all ages, and in all places, as grounded on
 " the most obvious reasoning from the *whole*
 " *course of nature,* but even the *revelations* of
 " *scripture,* constantly speak of God as the *uni-*
 " *versal Father,* as well as Governor, of men.
 " And our Saviour, JESUS CHRIST, has par-
 " ticularly taught us how to argue from *this*
 " *relation* God stands in to us. The argu-
 " ment

"ment is, that (*Matth. vii. 11.*) *If ye, being*
 "evil, know how to give good gifts unto your chil-
 "dren, how much more shall your Father, which
 "is in heaven, give good things to them that ask
 "him? What now is the temper and conduct
 "of fathers on earth, though they are evil, to-
 "wards their offspring? They readily do them
 "good, as they are able, while they behave
 "suitably; and as readily *chastise* them for their
 "profit, when they need *correction*: but they
 "do not put off the bowels of parents, and
 "punish their children *without pity*, having no
 "view to their *advantage*. We should enter-
 "tain an opinion of those parents, as *degene-*
 "rate to the last degree, who should inflict
 "misery on their own children, without any
 "intention to promote their *welfare* thereby,
 "in any shape whatever. And shall we say
 "that of our Father in heaven, (who, instead of
 "being evil, as all earthly fathers are more or
 "less, is *infinitely good*) which we cannot sup-
 "pose of any father on earth, till we have first
 "divested him of the heart of a father? Can
 "it reasonably be conceived, that that God,
 "who calls mankind his offspring without ex-
 "ception, and himself their father, should tor-
 "ment

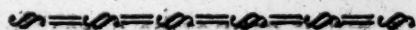
“ *ment them eternally without any intention to do*
 “ *them the least imaginable good, as must be the*
 “ *case, if the doctrine of never-ending misery be*
 “ *true? Will not GOD be as truly the father*
 “ *of wicked men in the other world, as he is*
 “ *in this? And, if he punishes them there, must*
 “ *it not be in the character of their father, who*
 “ *desires their good, and corrects them with a*
 “ *kind intention to promote it? No good rea-*
 “ *son, I will venture to say, can be assigned,*
 “ *why our SAVIOUR’s argument, founded on*
 “ *the nature of things, the relation that subsists*
 “ *between GOD and men; I say, no good rea-*
 “ *son can be given, why our SAVIOUR’s argu-*
 “ *ment—Much more will your Father in heaven*
 “ *give you good things—should be confined to the*
 “ *present, and not extended to the future world.*
 “ *And, perhaps, the only thing that has led*
 “ *most writers to confine the pity of our Father*
 “ *in heaven, and the merciful intention of his*
 “ *punishing his rebellious children, to the present*
 “ *life, is, the notion they have previously im-*
 “ *bibed of never-ceasing misery; which, having*
 “ *no real foundation in the sacred books of*
 “ *revelation, as has, I would hope, been abun-*
 “ *dantly proved, we are at liberty to conclude,*
 “ *that*

"that the *design* of *evil*, *punishment*, or *misery*,
"in the FUTURE WORLD, as well as *this*, is
"to DISCIPLINE wicked men, and, in this
"way, to effect their OWN PERSONAL, as
"well as the *general*, *good*."

MYST. HID FROM AGES.

DIALOGUE

D I A L O G U E S
IN THE
WORLD OF SPIRITS.



DIALOGUE I.

THEOPHILUS, ZELOTES, *and* PURGATUS.

THEOPHILUS.

LOOK, Zelotes, upon that face; Dost thou remember it?

ZELOTES.

I think it is a countenance which I once knew in our former state.

THEOPHILUS.

Had I not already seen several in a state of increasing happiness here, whom, while on earth

earth we accounted *adversaries* of religion, or of that which we esteemed *the truth*, I should not so readily conceive that stranger to be PURGATUS!

ZELOTES.

PURGATUS! There is, indeed, some resemblance; but it cannot be a reality! Thou rememberest, Theophilus, under what sentence I left *him*!

THEOPHILUS.

I remember the fulness of thy assurance, when I heard thee pronounce a doom upon him for futurity; but at that time I thought the language was harsh—accustomed, as *I* had been, to be confident. But as thy language, the effect of an ardent zeal, and a persuasion of thy being inspired, I did not then presume to rebuke thee. I did not indeed, myself, consider him as an heir of salvation. But, however GOD Almighty hath wrought, in the exercise of his power, wisdom, and goodness, it must be Purgatus! He approacheth us—let us meet him!

ZELOTES.

ZELOTES.

Not as Purgatus; be not deceived, Theophilus, I pray thee!

THEOPHILUS.

Zelotes, we have yet *something*—some of us may have yet *much*, to learn, of the mercy of GOD!—that mercy which first reached us on earth, and which is eternally over all, in every state of reflecting existence! My present life is sustained in mercy, but I cannot comprehend it.—Before Thee, O LORD! I marvel; and may all Thy dependant creatures praise Thee, on account of thy infinite attributes, O GOD of Hosts!

ZELOTES.

Amen! But let us pass by the stranger for the present: it may be a temptation, even in this heavenly state, for us to believe a lie. Remember, Theophilus, the inhabitants of an higher heaven were tempted, and fell!

THEO.

THEOPHILUS.

They were not tempted in believing to the glory of the power of God; a power which is in and through all—in all heights, and in all depths. Zelotes, my soul is filled, even now, with that faith, and runneth over; mercy raises its evidence above all doubt. I must speak to Purgatus.

“I greet thee, our new companion, by the name of Purgatus—albeit thou hast attained, as I humbly trust, another, and better name, in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

PURGATUS.

There is only one source of boundless goodness, to whom to ascribe all praise, for salvation in Heaven, as well as from the earth. And to Him must every thing be ascribed, that is worthy, and good, and glorious! But I find here are *degrees* of belief respecting the infinite nature of that goodness! I recognize thee by the name of Theophilus; a name which was among those of the valiant in the church militant; I knew it, and secretly honoured

honoured it, although I lost the companionship which I once had with thee. I greet thee now with ardency of affection. I also greet Zelotes—and that with as much affection as his present state of faith can receive; for, as I said before, here, even *here*, are *degrees* of faith. Thou canst not, Zelotes, fully believe that I am the same on whom thou passedst sentence. Neither, indeed, am I. But for a change from my former state, I never could have reached this! To GOD, as my righteous and merciful judge, be all praise!

ZELOTES.

I would gladly believe all that may be ascribed to the glory of GOD. But while I consider thy countenance, correspondent as it is with the happiness of this state, and yet think I am beholding the face of one, who was *Anathema Maranatha*; I remember the fervency and assurance with which I pronounced the word of the LORD upon him, and then belief fails me. I cannot believe that GOD Almighty would inspire me to pronounce a sentence in His name, upon an adversary of His truth, which He would not fulfil. But if thou art
the

the redeemed spirit of that offender, thou rememberest, and wilt repeat the words of the sentence; for Theophilus, who was present at my death-bed, promised they should be conveyed to thee.

THEOPHILUS.

In my well-meaning zeal I caused it to be done.

PURGATUS.

I remember them, Zelotes, and can now repeat them without the wrath and contempt which they once excited; and in which, with greater bitterness, though perhaps with less enthusiasm, I afterwards condemned thee! Those were the days of our different weakness and presumption!

Thy words, as conveyed to me, were these:
“He is a son of darkness, and a co-worker
“with the prince of the bottomless pit, in
“which his inheritance shall be for ever. And
“the judgment which I then (formerly) declared against him stands sealed by the Spirit
“of

“ of the LORD, by which I then declared unto
“ him, that, in the name of that GOD that
“ spanneth the heavens with his span, and
“ measureth the waters in the hollow of his
“ hand, I bind thee here on earth, and thou
“ art bound in heaven. And in the chain,
“ under darkness, to the judgment of the great
“ day, thou shalt be reserved, and thy faith and
“ strength thou boastest of I defy, and trample
“ under foot &c.”

ZELOTES.

Is it possible that my words should have been so full of judgment? Alas! they have a most presumptuous sound in this place. The Almighty, however, if He did not *command*, hath *pardoned* them. Therefore to Him be thanksgiving and glory, though I am amazed as in His presence, and cannot understand His infinite plan of government and mercy!

THEOPHILUS.

But, Zelotes, thou confessest, also, that the Almighty hath really restored to us the spirit of our brother Purgatus, dost thou not?

ZELOTES.

I must, and I do confess; but how, dear Theophilus! was it that thy faith was so much more strong, unto the glory of our Heavenly Father, than mine—even in this state of fellowship?

THEOPHILUS.

Our Creator and Preserver knoweth us still better than we know ourselves. We may ever learn, if we are but ever willing to be taught. Our meekness shall furnish our capacity for continual learning, by which we may continually rise higher in wisdom. Therein is the power of God set over all, and the meek and joyful rise in faith and happiness, by the strength of that power.

PURGATUS.

I can set an heavenly seal to the truth of the doctrine of Theophilus, having myself learned the lesson, and experienced the power, of meekness, through abundant tribulation. And, dear Zelotes, thou wilt know more of this, when thou shalt have passed the heavenly “silence of
“half

"half an hour," which I presume thou hast not yet known in all its solemnity; but which, in the mercy of God, whose progressive plan of redemption and refinement passeth our comprehension, thou wilt be brought to.

ZELOTES.

I receive thee now as an angel of light, whom I had once rejected as a child of darkness; I receive and acknowledge thee now, as one anointed in Heaven, above thy fellows!

PURGATUS.

Zelotes, thy soul is yet the seat of fervor in the extreme: thy faith in this heavenly state partakes of it. Thy views and apprehensions begin to enlarge into the divine fulness of celestial charity, and thou art transported with the change. But there is an heavenly temperance, which good and redeemed spirits increase in. I am not thy superior by any divine decree. I have no pretensions here, any more than I ought to have had on earth, to superior dignity. Our God hath made us, and will keep us, *fellow servants*; and therein

M 2

will

will our harmony be complete. I have also a seal for the verity of these things; and am a witness that the heavenly silence of half an hour, which Purgatus hath quoted from the revelations, will yet, Zelotes, remove all the remains of that imperfection, which arises from the quickness and ardour of thy spirit, so much accustomed, as it once was, to religious zeal! It is the last conquest, not over sin, but imperfection, that we have to make. I had frequent convictions of this sort, in the infirmity of the lower world, and I needed them.

ZELOTES.

May *my* convictions also, here, increase; and the season of effectual heavenly silence come!

THEOPHILUS.

Thus is fulfilled, in an high and heavenly sense, this word: "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power."

ZELOTES.

I pray God that *this* may be also realized, in my experience here, for surely it appertaineth
to

to the heavenly state, more than to the earthly,
*Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in
Heaven is perfect!*

THEOPHILUS.

Thou sayest well, and it is well with thee
in that thou so sayest. We are ministring
spirits one unto another, and I rejoyce in
ministring this unto thee; *be it according to thy
prayer and thy faith!*——But, Purgatus, why
seemest thou thus pensively and inwardly af-
fected, since it was written, that *the LORD shall
wipe away all tears from off all faces—and none
shall complain that they are sick?*

PURGATUS.

Thou knewest well the difference on earth,
between tears of sorrow and tears of joy; and
though sorrow and sighing shall be no more;
and though we be all changed; and in the
mercy of GOD shall be changed, from glory
to glory, as in the presence of the LORD; yet
are the children of the ransome, and of the
resurrection, both on earth and in heaven, but
creatures—creatures that cannot but be affected
with the boundless theme of mercy!

THEOPHILUS.

I rejoice, then, in these thy feelings; they become thy state; but seeing, Purgatus, that thou hast joined us, through much tribulation, and hast been marvellously refined from the dross and from the tin of thy own works, relate to us, if it be permitted thee, thy redemption, and let us consider it as a subject of thanksgiving and praise!

ZELOTES.

Let me also add my wishes, that we may edify together, from the detail of a work of judgment, crowned with everlasting mercy! Purgatus, thy presence hath already done me good. And notwithstanding my unbelief at the first, I now rejoice with unutterable joy for thy salvation. Proceed if thou canst, as our brother Theophilus requested: for every theme, and every stage of salvation and peace, on earth, is worthy of being remembered in Heaven, and dwelt upon with thanksgiving!

PURGATUS.

Most readily, and most gladly, would I relate to you, if it were possible, the whole that I

have known of "the loving kindness of our God, in the land of the living:" but had not the subject *exceeded* all power of human conception, or heavenly speech, surely I had not been here!

THEOPHILUS.

We were animated on earth by a lively faith in this divinity: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" In that state of ignorance, in which "we saw but darkly as through a glass," we had sometimes "a zeal not according to knowledge;" yet our faith in the plenitude of immortal goodness, and the taste we had of immortal love, kept us alive, in a stedfast and fervent hope;—a hope that prepared us for rejoicing in all the good in which we now rejoice;—yea, and in which we ever will rejoice! Proceed, we pray thee!

PURGATUS.

How shall I relate the conflict of that day, when judgment began its work unto victory?

How

How shall I set forth the solemnities of that season, when I laid me down in sickness, "mourning, lamentation, and woe?"

The work of my repentance, for the deeds done in the body, was indeed cut short in righteousness! The weight of the judgment that was upon me, was as the mountains; and the over-flowings thereof as the waves of the troubled sea. The awful sentence of God's judgment, seemed to me *irrevocable*. Death itself seemed to lay in wait for my soul, to take it; and all its terrors laid hold upon me! I had nothing to plead: the merits and the atonement of him who died for all, had no language of application for me: and though they were transiently thought upon, it was only in secret horror and inward desperation. Then cried I, the bitter cry of Cain; "My punishment is greater than I can bear:" and in all the bitterness and anguish of my distress, I wept, inwardly, those tears, which softened the hardness of my heart, and I was enabled to cry for mercy in the name of JESUS.

In

In the accumulated darkness and distress of a most tremendous night, my soul seemed to take her journey from that world! But whither she was journeying, or to what depths of misery bound, was then an awful uncertainty. But as the mercy, so the judgment (which indeed is mercy too) of the Most High, is not to be set forth. My suffering was a season of peculiar pain. The misery, likewise, was felt, and the wailings were heard, of unnumbered surrounding spirits! I lost, by degrees, all recollection of time, of past transgression, and of past tribulation! I seemed in the *chaos of eternity*, wherein one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. How long, therefore, the duration was, ask me not. Consciousness at length became lost in the chaos: and I afterwards found that I had slept, but through what periods of duration, I had no power of estimation afforded me to judge of. But that sleep was a sleep of rest, and the entrance into the unspeakable mercies of our God!

When I awoke, out of that sleep, I found myself standing on the borders of a pleasant land, which a good angel told me was the verge of
the

the region of the spiritual *Palestine*. I fell down, with my face to the ground, and worshipped, and gave thanks; and with me was a company of the transgressors of many nations, who, because of the bitterness of their cry, and their sincere mourning and penitence before God, were delivered from the judgment, and found themselves clothed with new bodies, as I also was. I lifted up my eyes at the inward sense of a privilege to look up, and those who were with me also looked up. And lo! MOUNT SION was before me, and behold a clear and glorious light appeared upon that mountain! And the LORD of the whole earth, and of all redemption, was there, and angels ministered unto him. His face was the likeness of the mercy of God; and as the glory of God was the shining thereof. His raiment was as the brightness of the firmament when the sun goeth down; and the cross on which he was crucified stood on the mountain beneath him, and shined as burnished gold. And a multitude, which no man could number, seemed to flow in; some from under clouds of darkness, as from long punishment, tribulation, and woe; and others, more serene and happy, from brighter quarters
of

of the earth, as though their sins had gone "before-hand to judgment." And they all stood still, and were astonished at the glory of the mountain; yet no man said unto another, "here is no room for thee;" neither "stand thou behind me." And as I stood amongst them I heard the sound of melody from the mountain; "and I heard, as it were, the sound of harpers harping with their harps." And while I was beholding, one of the angels sounded a golden trumpet, and said, "Draw near unto the great ransome of the day of continual mercy, that was sealed on *Calvary!*"

ZELOTES.

Verily the LORD our GOD is wonderful in all his ways, glorious in mercy as in holiness! I was made to partake, though in a vision, of a different solemnity, of the ransome on MOUNT CALVARY, also!

THEOPHILUS.

And my soul beareth witness in this state, as it did on earth, that there is no name given by which any can be saved, and justified, and admitted

admitted into this rest, but the name of JESUS. He was, indeed, and ever is, to his militant church, IMMANUEL! He saveth, and delivereth from temptation, all them that believe in his name; and inwardly *prepareth* them for an inheritance in his glorious kingdom, for ever: But the *last* preparation for that inheritance, and by which men are fitly convinced that their salvation is "not barely by works of righteousness which they have done," must be effected through the spiritual vision of MOUNT CALVARY! I also was brought to the celestial righteousness of that place, in my passage to this heavenly kingdom, lest any tincture of the nature of my former self should remain, and unfit me for that joy, which only is complete in the reign of CHRIST and of GOD!

ZELOTES.

I perceive, my ever dear and illuminated brother, that thou hast a sermon for *me* in heaven! I, truly, was brought to CALVARY, and suffered much *abasement*, as well as *deliverance*, there; but I fear I brought away with me a tincture of my own zeal, which till now impeded the divine charity of my faith, and
mixed

mixed with the sincerity of my love. Hence it was, that I was rather disposed to wish, that this our pardoned and ransomed brother should never be numbered in heaven, than that *my* prophecy should fail! Alas! the mystery of that refined deceitfulness, which enters into a zeal for the supposed cause of the LORD of hosts!

I with my dear friends, whom I left behind, may not have published the sentence which I so rashly pronounced; death-bed declarations, though sometimes the effect of discomposure of the mind, are liable to wrong estimation and use, among poor imperfect over-zealous men. But why should I be solicitous about it? GOD hath pardoned and rectified what was amiss in me, and he will most certainly prevent any evil arising to other beings from any words of mine! *Glory to him for ever.*

PURGATUS.

Thy deliverance from the remains of thy imperfect zeal will more fully come! And thou wilt see, yet more clearly, and feel, as Spirits, refined through greater suffering, have
learned

learned to feel, the *universality* of the love of our God!

THEOPHILUS.

Thy infirmity, Zelotes, was not that of a *corrupted will*; and though thou wert wanting in *meekness*, thou hadst thy usefulness among men, and in thy zeal wast accepted as a servant of thy own order. Thou hast not been alone in thy infirmities. The prophet *Jonah*, though deeply convinced of the love and mercy of his God, towards all who become penitent, even through terror, was afraid to prophesy of judgment, lest repentance and pardon should follow. And after he did prophesy, with an effectual alarm of destruction, it seemed as though he would rather the whole city of *Nineveh* should have perished, than that the accomplishment of his prophecy should have been precluded by the divine mercy!

But the infinite nature of the wisdom and goodness of the LORD Almighty, is more than sufficient to correct, and reduce to heavenly order, whatever hath been amiss in his servants.

PURGATUS.

PURGATUS.

I have listened, with delighted attention, to your reflections, and am thankful that the work of additional conviction is going forward in this present state, as the means of advancement to the highest wisdom as well as the highest love. My happiness will be increased, if the conclusion of my relation may be the means of enlarging your convictions, to the glory of God, and the increase of thanksgiving. For I perceive, that though we have all been ransomed, sanctified, and justified at CALVARY, yet have we been there benefited in different companies, or classes of companions; have had different views of the œconomy and salvation of the last glorious audit; and that in proportion to our different prejudices, sufferings for sin, and degrees of refinement, which we had previously experienced!

THEOPHILUS.

That is undoubtedly true—proceed now, we intreat thee, in thy solemn narrative.

PURGATUS.

When the angel sounded the golden trumpet, and gave permission to draw near; the multitude

tude that had been waiting, in silent astonishment at the glory which they beheld, moved towards the mountain. And I saw among them that moved with me, a company of many people, that seemed to be incumbered with a number of earthen vessels, some carrying them in their hands, and others on their shoulders; while others again had various instruments of musick, much resembling those that were seen on the earth. And behold there was another angel employed to sound, and he sounded these words; "approach no farther." And all the multitude stood still, and were silent, and waited till they should be commanded what to do. Then the angel sounded again, and said unto them who were incumbered with earthen vessels, "What have you brought with you?" And they answered, "The sum of the righteousness of the whole law, which we have kept, and have not transgressed; therefore have we brought it as the proper purchase of our peace."

But the angel sounded again, and answered in the name of the LORD of the whole earth, "Cast away those earthen vessels from you,
" their

“ their contents are known, and their weight
“ also. Your righteousness availed much in
“ the world, both to yourselves and your fellow
“ beings; it had its reward there, and saved you
“ from judgment; but this is the day of mercy.”

Then said the angel unto them who had brought musical instruments, “ And wherefore
“ have you brought these?” But they began to be confounded, and answered with shame,
“ We had brought these with us to make melody
“ in heaven; having weakly conceived that
“ the musick with which we had been delighted
“ on earth, was in itself divine, and must enter
“ into songs of heavenly praise.” Then the angel answered them also, “ Cast away these
“ from you, for of such things ye shall have
“ no need: neither, indeed, can you enter with
“ them into heaven: but you shall all have
“ your melody in yourselves.”

The vessels and instruments being cast away, the multitude were directed to move again toward the mountain; and they accordingly moved, till they came within the distance of two hundred cubits of the foot of the moun-

tain, which was the space appointed for the attendance of the angels before the throne on which the LORD of the whole earth sat, for the sanctification of the multitude. And when we had approached to the space of the angels, the multitude stood still of their own accord, as not being able to endure a nearer approach to the glory of the mountain; and there we fell down on our faces, and worshipped, and gave thanks; for the love of GOD and of the Lamb had reached us, and the hearts of the hindermost of them that had moved towards the mountain, became melted thereby; through all the multitude a voice was not heard, for no one retained the power of utterance: but tears were on all faces—the last tears of penitence for transgression, and forgetfulness of GOD; tears of tenderness for the sufferings of JESUS; tears of joy for the boundless benefits of his covenant! It was then that these words were most divinely verified: “Blow the trumpet in “Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly!”

The prostration of the multitude continued for a short season, till the first angel again sounded from the mountain, and said;
“Arise

“ Arise and stand on your feet; your tears and
“ your thanksgivings have been accepted, and
“ your tribulations are finished!” And when
we had all stood up, we beheld the glory of the
mountain increase, and our sight was strengthened
to behold it. And we beheld the face of
the LORD of all the earth, that shined with an
indiscribable glory. We heard the sound of
the melody of the angels, that was made with-
out any visible instruments; the smell of the
place was sweeter than the smell of Leba-
non; the odours of all Arabia seemed to be
there; and there seemed to be the spiritual
incense of the sacrifices of all altars, and of all
hills!

And as we stood before the mountain, and
beheld the glory, and rejoiced in the presence
of the LORD, and of the angels, the angel
which had the golden trumpet sounded the last
time, and said: “ Blessed are ye penitent from
“ all the ends of the earth; ye have been re-
“ deemed through judgment, and ransomed in
“ the love of JESUS, our Lord; and death
“ and hell shall be no more unto you! Depart
“ therefore into everlasting habitations!”

As soon as the angel had uttered these words, the vision of the mountain, and of the glory, and of the angels, became changed for a sensible abode in these realms, in which we have now the happiness to be united, and to enjoy this new and unspeakable rest! The power which we now have, of recollecting the sorrows that are past, we feel to be a triumphant power, over death, hell, and the grave, unmixed with any consciousness of guilt, or any fear of falling again into a desire of any other enjoyment, than the song of *Holiness unto the LORD for ever*: ALLELUJAH!

THEOPHILUS.

Glorious and triumphant rest!

ZELOTES.

To be acknowledged, and magnified, for ever and ever. ALLELUJAH!

DIALOGUE

D I A L O G U E II.

HENRY VIII.—*Dukes of SOMERSET and
NORTHUMBERLAND.*

HENRY.

DO I not, after this long experience of misery, behold the faces of two of my old friends, *Hertford* and *De Lisle*? I should have been glad, once more, to see you, if any recollection of our former intercourse could give me pleasure. But if I rightly judge, though you seem to have newly met in these unjoyous shades, you have but little sympathy with each other in your unhappiness! You look rather with mutual jealousy and envy. Tell me, *Hertford*, are not my sentiments right?

SOMERSET.

Your majesty, or rather, as I should have said, your *once-acknowledged* majesty, has rightly remembered my person. And the discovery of you gives me some small alleviation of gloom and solicitude. But I must tell you,
that

that for want of being acquainted with the latter part of my life, you have misnamed my *dignity*.

HENRY.

O, my old friend! what a word is *dignity*!—
De Lisle! how has it long fared with *thee*?

NORTHUMBERLAND.

If I should attempt to tell, words must fail me! But I hope I have not been more miserable than *Somerſet*: neither is he more intitled to *diſtinction* than myself. I alſo am a *duke*; and you cannot expect that I ſhould recognize *your* *majeſty*, if you ſpurn at my *dignity*, too.

HENRY.

I ſpurn at nothing, my friend; that is all paſt with me: I have learned to condemn myſelf, and therefore I *pity* you. My *majeſty* has long been no more: remembrance that it ever exiſted, has coſt me many a heavy thought! Your remaining unhappineſs ſeems to ariſe much from your yet-unconquered *pride*. Whatſoever of evil was not conquered in the will,
before

before we quitted the body, remained to be subdued through greater pain. Pride must have its end.

SOMERSET.

I do not, for my part, feel a very strong attachment to my former title. It brought me but little comfort, in the world which gave it me; but I do not like to be treated with disrespect by one, who, admitting he ever was a duke, was made so after my days: I knew nothing of his dukedom. He was known, when I left the world, only as Earl of *Warwick*; but, perhaps, I was put to death to make way for his aggrandizement.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

As thou wouldst have sacrificed me in equal circumstances!

SOMERSET.

And as *thou* (I have been informed) wast, at length, righteously sacrificed, thyself.

HENRY.

HENRY.

What do I hear? and what miserable comforters am I like to have in you? You boast of *dukedom*s, give hints of *state murder*, and what beside I know not; but say, my old friend, didst *thou* really come into these regions by the title of *Duke of Somerset*?

SOMERSET.

That is a trying question; I *was* such a duke, in a world of ambition, which I made a prelude to the greater calamity, that is now upon me; but the question, by what title I came *hither* awakens me to more humble thoughts.

HENRY.

When I knew thee in the mortal body, thou wast not the most envious or malignant of men! And I am persuaded thou hast not been the last to humble thyself here: thy thoughts must have wandered again into new dangers of ambition!—But, *De Lisle*, didst *thou* come hither by the title of duke of *Northumberland*?

NORTHUM-

NORTHUMBERLAND.

Yes. That was my title; and since I have here found no better dignity, I have an equal right with *Somerfet*, to assert and maintain a distinction, which I obtained at least by an equal authority.

HENRY.

Somerfet was urged by surprise into new jealousies; but he has corrected himself of this folly, and is growing wiser. He, I hope, will soon be sufficiently weary of such vain and wretched strife. *My* title was once deemed great; that supposed greatness was a source of much unhappiness, and succeeding woe; but humbled and afflicted as I am, I seem to have some superiority over you, in that I have learned to renounce a *boasting* disposition. Even that superiority I wish not that you should suffer me to maintain: perhaps I have gained it through degrees of misery, which you can never experience, because your crimes may have required less atonement: less poignancy of punishment may be your portion, for we cannot understand the rules by which the infinite Judge dispenses

dispenses of eternal judgment; the soul that hath been most polluted *may* become *sooner* changed than that which hath been less; but, the *quantity* of the misery must be ever proportioned to our crimes. Some purpose, as well as the eternal righteousness, of the Judge, is hence deducible. And what shall that purpose be, but *good*? Are ye not capable of a wish for *good*? Evil was never so resolutely borne as that. But while *strife of pride* is maintained, *good*, however to be received, cannot come! To apply this, then, to present means of unhappiness. Former titles were at least but former vanities; and to keep up the remembrance of them here, could avail nothing, to the least guilty: to the most guilty, it must be to augment their wretchedness. But if we are to use *some* distinction of name, your titles, being as empty as any other sounds to me, I will call you by them; and unless you can find a name for me more simple, call me *Henry*, and address me as your fellow. So much for titles and names. Let us turn our thoughts, I pray you, to something more important.

We

We have done with the *business* of that world of wickedness—a world in which you, as well as my unhappy self, must have borne an unworthy part—otherwise ye had not been here: but the spirits whom I left behind, were *immortal*! (Seriousness shall rest for ever on that sound!) They must *now* exist: the *where*, and the *how*, concern us next to our own calamities: with those calamities, indeed, they are mingled. I have found it so; but while those whom I injured have been here constantly present to my mind, and have thereby augmented my wretchedness; those in whom I took delight, and on whom only my soul rested for pleasure, have not been permitted to lessen one gloomy reflection! You will perceive that I allude, among others, to my child *Edward*. Can you give me any tidings of him?

SOMERSET.

I left him living, when this *Warwick* brought me to the scaffold; but as a part of my offence was loving thy son too well, and enjoying too much of his princely favour, I know not of a certainty whether he was protected or ruined:
erhaps

perhaps the latter—for it was not probable that so much malignity, as my enemy possessed, should be satisfied with one object.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

Thy insinuations partake of thy earthly nature; and thou, who in that state of being hadst ever an ear open to calumny, betrayest in this, thy former listening against me, to vile and slanderous spirits; but I defy thee to prove against me the treachery which thou wouldst load me with.

SOMERSET.

A guilty conscience, even *here*, will betray itself! But I have nothing to do with *proof*, against thee, for thy evil deeds: thou art under the punishment of eternal justice—that is sufficient for thee!

HENRY.

Alas! I begin to fear the rest. *Northumberland*, tell me, I pray thee, what became of my son? But why do I ask for the possibility of more unhappiness? Have I not had enough?
And

And how shall the gratification of such curiosity either help me, or diminish evil that is not to be prevented?

NORTHUMBERLAND.

He died! He died while yet a youth.

SOMERSET.

That was no *strange* event.

HENRY.

But, *Somerſet*, (to hazard at least one particular enquiry) by whom was *thy* warrant of death ſigned? Surely not by my child.

SOMERSET.

By the *hand* of *Edward*; but I believe his *heart* was far from it. Would to the righteous King of Heaven, that I could blot out from the fair page of thy child's infancy, ſo great a conſtrast to the wiſdom and virtue of his other deeds! But had I the power of concealing it from thee, *Warwick* would tell it thee from motives of malignity, to augment thy trouble.

HENRY.

HENRY.

I asked not, *Somerset*, for another reflection on thy former competitor—it may be true—but seeing, as thou hast confessed, that he is under his due degree of a righteous retributive judgment; from which also thou thyself art not yet delivered, because thou art not purified for deliverance—let that suffice. If thy earthly injuries and sufferings have been compensated here, already, with some degree of evidence that MERCY lives for ever—think most on that! It is possible for us to *protract* the period of our possible release—which is to renew our guilt! All the advantage to be reaped from allusion to the former scene, if that scene be found full of infirmity, error, and wickedness, is to be the more convinced by it of the general evil of human nature, that we may reverence the holiness of God!

SOMERSET.

That is most true! I wish to correct myself from all remains of an upbraiding disposition!

NORTHUM-

NORTHUMBERLAND.

By that calumniating tongue of thine, *Somerset*, thou hast given full proof that thou wert justly punished. Thy ambitious usurpation of authority, fully called for the sacrifice of thy head, and proved that thy prince was the vicerent of Heaven, in consigning thee to destruction.

HENRY.

I conjure thee, *Northumberland*, neither to justify on the one hand, nor to reproach on the other: I have found, by woful experience, that all former discord had an infernal source, and must be atoned for in suffering!

SOMERSET.

Doomed, as I have been, to these mournful regions, to bear in this poor existence, a judgment upon certain impieties of my nature; I can yet, *Northumberland*, (I renounce envy, and give thee that name) I can yet acquit myself of evils which thou wouldst impute to me. I feel myself less malignant than thyself at least, even in this misery. And though I have learned that
thou

thou, in thy turn, wast brought to the scaffold, (in consequence of the progress of thy ambition) I wave any further reproach on that head, and look upon thee with pity, as more deeply miserable than myself!

NORTHUMBERLAND.

How is it that thou wilt make thyself *less* wretched? Surely thou hast no claim to favour, more than others! Hast thou not had *fratricide* to atone for, among thy crimes?

SOMERSET.

I thought myself obliged to consent to the death of one,* whose turbulence was not to be governed; and I consented to the sacrifice, not of a brother, but of a citizen, who troubled the government, and endangered the peace of the people. I lamented the loss of a *brother*; while justice to the community required me to relinquish him! But I would not plead for purity of motives, where jealousy of power, and the sacrifice of blood, were so nearly connected.

* His brother, Sir *Thomas Seymour*, one of the Council.

NORTHUM-

NORTHUMBERLAND.

Neither, if these motives could warrant thee, in sacrificing thy own brother, can I be at a loss to justify whatever I did, to counteract the purposes of my enemies. Thy own death, so far as I was concerned in it, shall be pleaded as a *virtuous* measure; and even all the political sacrifices that were made at the instigation of *Henry* himself, will become justified, and placed among the good deeds, which have brought him to this *happy* existence!

HENRY.

Alas! Alas! What a world of wickedness and desolation was that! And what a state of hardness in guilt is this! What words shall besit me better in this place, than those of poor ambitious and suffering *Woolsey*: "Had I but served my God!" Had I but sought counsel of Him, and walked obediently before Him! then had my kingdom been exampled in fear, in reverence, and in truth! then had I not been doomed, myself, to these woes, and to the sorrows of beholding the victims of the divine justice! But my polluted days were

spent in the wantonness of sensuality and bloodshed, which gave a sanction to oppression, and rendered crimes familiar !

I cannot reproach thee, *Northumberland*, if reproaches would avail either thee or me. My own most impious example forbids it: I should rather attribute thy sufferings, and thy vain-glorious state, to the influence of my own abominations ! All the innocent, abused, and righteous friends and relatives, who fell victims to my passions and hypocrisy, are witnesses against me, that I laid the foundation of trouble to my fellow beings, by my own crimes. Ye also are witnesses: but in the reverent acknowledgment of that justice which is for ever, how shall we hope any deliverance from this kind of intercourse, but by our continual endeavours to be humble ?

We, my unhappy companions, may torment one another by mutual recrimination—such is the power to be derived from that diabolical agency which surrounds us. But since the deeds that are past, are not *now* to be remedied ; and there is an eternal GOD in Heaven
to

to be acknowledged with trembling, let us not farther provoke his judgments upon us, I conjure you both! O for some portion of that spirit which once dwelt in *Granmer*! Is it impossible that some ministration of such a spirit may attend us, unworthy as we all have been!

SOMERSET.

He, indeed, was once "a burning and a shining light." But he also was human, and his perverted hand became stained with blood! —My death warrant was signed by his consent!

HENRY.

Was it possible that *he* should leave the altar for such a deed! *He* who once virtuously fled from holding counsel against his inveterate enemy!* Your times must then have been perilous and most bloody! And if *his* hand was found stained with blood, in state policy, then may it possibly have been so in religion; and then may the judgment of a righteous God have fallen upon him also! For, most awfully just and equal are the dispensations of

* The Duke of Norfolk, left under sentence of death by Henry.

the Almighty! Let us then talk no more of *Cranmer*—let us not attribute to humanity any stability of excellence; but, as only *one* is good, that is, GOD himself—let us not think of inferior aid; or of any possible purification, but from boundless mercy, through Him, who eternally was of GOD.

SOMERSET.

Henry, thy fervency affects my guilty soul, and excites a congenial cry within me. O that all remains of my impenitence were as much done away, as thine!

HENRY.

And far more fully! I have suffered, also most deeply, and most justly—I hope, to some happy purpose of refinement; but when I reflect how much remains of *me*, that can never enter a celestial place, I tremble at the fear of the *pains* which are yet to come!

SOMERSET.

Were it possible for *my* deliverance to be wrought out, by “*pains yet to come*,” I surely could

could do, what I have not yet been able to effect, as I wish—*give thanks!* But I have injured my desperate cause, by vindicating myself, and drawing, in my own favour, against a fellow-sufferer, one shadow of a grain of righteousness!

HENRY.

That, *Somerſet*, is the diſpoſition which befits our ſtate the beſt. We have nothing to plead in extenuation of the guilt which hath occaſioned our long and painful doom! And if there be any ultimate mercy for us, we muſt attain it through ſubmiſſive ſilence, and a penitence equal to the duration of our ſuffering; which, however long and afflictive, is allotted to us, in the meaſure of heavenly juſtice.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

Your language is now become inglorious as your doom; and if you have nothing more heroick to communicate, I ſhall take my leave of you! To play the coward at laſt, in theſe circumſtances, may accord with *your* former deeds; but *my* reſolves of bravery are invincible.

HENRY.

Thy resolves, *Northumberland*, may be those of an hardened offender; but they can only increase thy torment; while GOD, who is judging thee in righteousness, and is acquainted with all thy thoughts, cannot, in the consistency of his glorious attributes, ever grant thee pardon in this thy state of impenitence.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

It will suffice me that my torment shall not really exceed yours, while my fortitude shall make me your superior.

SOMERSET.

Talk not, *Northumberland*, of superiority, in rebellion against thy Maker! The Devils themselves, who believe and tremble, might be saved before us, in such a hardened state! The doctrine of *endless* torments may be realized; on those who *strive* to maintain their infamy. I have erred, most unhappily, by vindicating myself in a comparison with thee; but I would do so no further: GOD is infinite in greatness, which requires our submission—infinite in wisdom,

dom, which requires our reverence—and infinite in goodness, which requires our acknowledgments. We cannot acquit ourselves in either, equally with His perfections; but let us, under our present calamity, learn to do all we can!

HENRY.

Northumberland, relent, relent; if it be possible for thee to bear an increase of thy punishment, without blasphemy, what wilt thou gain? If not, what wilt thou not lose?

NORTHUMBERLAND.

I have nothing now to lose but my *bravery*; and as the prince of darkness, and all his host, can sustain themselves by *that*, I shall have companions in my triumph! You pretend to hope for better fare—therefore to your miserable hopes I shall leave you.

HENRY.

Not without our prayers for thee; they shall mingle with those for ourselves, and for all that exist under the punishment of a righteous condemnation!

NORTHUM-

NORTHUMBERLAND.

Fare ye well, in your cowardice! I may never see you more; but if you think of me, consider me not as one who wishes for society with any, so base as ye have proved yourselves!
[Departing.]

SOMERSET.

Northumberland, do not depart thus! Thou wouldst not go to *greater wretchedness*, determined, as thou seemest, to triumph! If thou hast not relented, and wilt not relent, under the consciousness of thy sins, and thy own merited sufferings; yet consider the tendencies of thy former deeds, and whether the sufferings of others, whom thy devices injured, may not call for thy remorse. It was not, on earth, the part of a *brave* man to be untouched with calamities which he had brought on the innocent and the good! Hast thou nothing of this kind to trouble thee, and to excite repentance? Thou carriest within thee a dark tormenting horror, which yet thou disdainest to confess; but wilt thou triumph, also, because that horror has been the consequence of ruin to those who never injured thee?

NORTHUM-

NORTHUMBERLAND.

That, *Somerſet*, hath hit me to the quick!

SPIRIT.

[The inviſible ſpirit of *Lord Guilford Dudley* is ſuppoſed to exclaim—] “My father! my father! O my moſt preſumptuous, unhappy father! Relent, and be not for ever at that dreadful diſtance from me!”

Another SPIRIT.

[The inviſible ſpirit of *Lady Jane Gray* is ſuppoſed alſo to exclaim—] “Thou, who by a falſe ambition procuredſt an ignominious death for thy ſon; and for me the mortal ſhadow of a crown, at the ſame time that thou cloſedſt up a life of trouble to thyſelf, in a ſtate of impenitence before heaven! how long wilt thou reſuſe to be penitent?”

NORTHUMBERLAND.

Whom, alas! have I heard reprove me? Thoſe are the voices of the innocent, and the injured, indeed! Whither ſhall I now flee?
How

How shall I escape from all the wretchedness that my depraved nature can bear?

HENRY.

What, *Northumberland*, hast thou heard?

NORTHUMBERLAND.

I perceive, then, the voices were only heard by me. They were those of my injured children—who are, undoubtedly, saints in the heavenly rest; but made acquainted, for some purpose of more affliction to me, with my state of terror!

HENRY.

I heard them not; but if thou hast had a warning admonition from an higher sphere, regard it not as a sign of evil, but of some *good*, to be yet attendant on thee: albeit thou hast a large portion of misery yet to come, before thy sins can be sufficiently atoned for, purged, and consumed away!

SOMERSET.

Such, might I now presume to counsel, would be my advice; but if, *Northumberland*,
thou

thou hast been so signally admonished, I must presume to hope that our admonitions will be the less necessary. If any thing which I have said already, unworthy as I am, have prepared thee, but as an hair's-breadth, for better thoughts, my unhappiness will be somewhat lessened; and *I* will hope for better thoughts, as *thine* shall change for better.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

But how shall I hope for relief, from better thoughts, when the injured monitors that spake to me are the tender children, whom my ambition ruined? *Henry!* the story of those children, whom I embroiled, I fear, in bloody mischief, would give thee new distress; it must be borne by myself alone, if I and this increased trouble can exist together! O God of justice! Thy terrors are indeed upon me! Thy judgment burns within me, while Thou thyself art hid!

HENRY.

I have had enough, my friend, of *earthly* information; and unless by imparting thou
couldst

couldst lessen thy own calamity, say nothing more; in condemnation of thyself. Thou art under the judgment of that righteous One, who knows all the malignity that may have polluted thy better thoughts. In His judgment only thou art now accountable: bear thy woes, in abasement before Him, for from Him only can the possibility of help come. This may be a *comparatively* happy period of our present interview!

The God of celestial spirits keep us from falling again into a state of wrath! And bring us, with all who mourn in such a tribulation, to the day of his heavenly power, and the light of his eternal mercy! We now must part: *my* summons draws me again to solitude—to wander—where hope is but another name for gloom!

SOMERSET.

And *mine* also; but, O *Henry*! I fear that the gloom, yet to be endured by me, is darker!

NORTHUMB.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

With *trembling*, not with *pride*, I now bid you farewell!—To misery, far more than gloom, I must turn away!—O ye spirits, that dwell in discord, torment me not!—But thou, most righteous GOD, who canst only punish them that were 'once thy creatures, for a purpose of good, that shall rest far below *Thyself*; (for *Thou* canst not be pleased with the endless torment of such as I am) give me, of thy mighty and infinite power, to call upon thy terrible name! That in all my anguish, I may remember *Thee*—and, of thy mercy, be delivered from “the blackness of darkness for ever!”

DIALOGUE

11/11/12 10:11:11

D I A L O G U E I I I .

The APOSTLE PAUL, and a PROTESTANT MARTYR.

APOSTLE.

IN all this multitude of happy spirits, with whom we are permitted to have our celestial abode, I have been reflecting that no two countenances have an exact resemblance of each other, any more than I could formerly observe among the inhabitants of the earth: yet all partake of joy from the one source of rejoicing! The very thought of that is a subject of delight. Thou, my friend, whosoever thou art, hast a peculiar cast of serenity; thy reward is undoubtedly a rich one, and I congratulate thee upon it, most feelingly! But tell me, if thou canst without pain to thyself, whence thou camest from thy first state of existence.

MARTYR.

I was a poor protestant christian minister, who suffered martyrdom on the earth, in a
notable

notable massacre, inflicted on one christian community by another; on the eve of a religious feast, about fifteen centuries after the apostles.

APOSTLE.

I was acquainted with martyrdom. I also was a martyr. Thou mayest have heard of me, for my life was not spent in a corner. I was born in Tarsus, and my name was *Paul*.

MARTYR.

Indeed I have—I have largely read of thy character, and of those writings attributed to thee. From them, as well as from those of thy brother apostles, I learned much of the œconomy of christian ministry, and the fortitude of the christian faith. Many have been the followers of thy doctrines, as thou professedst to follow the example of JESUS.

APOSTLE.

I am not without hope, in this glorified state, that my labours were made effectual to the salvation of some, who lived with me upon the earth, and who may have succeeded me in tribulation

bulation there; but had I that period to pass through again, with the celestial knowledge that I have since gained, I might still be a more useful,—a more pure and divine teacher!

MARTYR.

That is possible, and indeed I do not wonder at thy thinking so, after thy experience of this more perfect state. My own, perhaps far inferior, capacity for heavenly wisdom, can discern an abundant difference between what I am, and what I was. But that was a state of infancy, in celestial knowledge and love. And though thou wast a father in the militant church, in comparison of multitudes engaged in that warfare—and wast distinguished for divine eloquence and fervency—I perceived, according to thy own confession, that thou sometimes spakest as a man of human prudence, rather than as an oracle of divinity.

APOSTLE.

I did so; but, perhaps, in some states of my mind I spake enough also of *infallible* assurance. I was undoubtedly, after a miraculous con-

version, an instrument of divine communication, and had in my real experience the fervent spirit of piety. But while I was in the body, I was human, and liable to infirmity. In that state I was sometimes largely convinced of it; but afterwards much more abundantly!

MARTYR.

Various were the sentiments formed by men, before and in my time, respecting the precise and comparative inspiration of the apostles; and almost endless the commentaries made on their writings, to prove, or to refute, different systems of religion; and it often happened, that men of directly opposite sentiments religiously concluded themselves supported from the same source of authority.

APOSTLE.

And so you had our writings handed down to that period, and in religious use among you.

MARTYR.

We had; and after those sayings of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, which were included
in

in your testimonies, yours were regarded as the sacred documents of all the different christian communities. All agreed generally in regarding them as divine; but differences often arose about their particular import.

APOSTLE.

That I foresaw might be the case among our successors in the ministry; for even my brother apostles and myself disagreed in some instances; particularly in external matters, relative to the law, and the significance of Jewish peculiarities.

MARTYR.

So it appeared to some of us on the earth, and in my time I remember it stood recorded in our scriptures, and in words set down as thine, that thou *withstoodst* a brother apostle "to the face, because he was to be blamed;" but we were not without our doubts, that in some instances, the apostles' words were a little varied from their original sense, to answer some occasional views of early churchmen.

APOSTLE.

It is possible you might be sometimes right in your conjectures; but as to the passage quoted, I believe it was so written—and upon that occasion we parted, “walking no more together.” We both, I conclude, believed ourselves respectively right; but it could be no otherwise so, than by furnishing an instance to prove, that infallibility was not an essential quality in the apostolick character, merely as distinct from other men; as shewing a reason to the church for mutual forbearance; or, as a proof that the essential part of the christian religion consisted not in a precise external uniformity. But perhaps our sentiments, or I may rather say *my* sentiments, about *infallibility* and *uniformity*, were as liable as any to perversion; for I had much natural fire!

MARTYR.

I conclude they were; for we discovered on earth, in my days, and it seemed to have been the case in preceding ages, a very general disposition, in religious professors, to avail themselves of all sanction for dominion over the consciences

consciences of their fellow-beings. And I often privately regretted, that seeing there was such a reluctance to suffering one passage of scripture, or doctrine, to explain another in a liberal and worthy sense, there should have been any possibility of misconstruction, or any marks of imperfection in the sacred writings!

APOSTLE.

Perfection is a state much to be desired, in any stage of rational existence; but it appertained not to human nature, however refined, or capable of refinement: the perfection to which *we* aspired, and exhorted our fellow beings, was *comparative*,—and, in comparison of intelligences in superior spheres, might well have been deemed insignificant—as, that of our present state is, in comparison with the highest orders of beings. Yet we were right in deeming the highest possible attainment of love and wisdom, to be our duty, and our greatest happiness, in the body. Our duty in this respect could not have been discharged, nor any substantial happiness attained, without setting before us a purpose of advancement, towards even *the divine* perfection itself. The experience

rience of *good*, I mean of *inward delight*, which was consequent on every resistance of evil, and every conquest over evil propensity, produced an ardour of soul for the completion of conquest, both in ourselves and those to whom we ministered. The means by which we were conscious of improvement, became a kind of standard of divine regulation, which, sometimes without a positive assurance of particular inspiration, we were naturally prone to consider as indispensable, or divinely fixed for the human race. And though it was possible for us to be the subjects of immediate divine inspiration; *i. e.* the recipients of a power and wisdom, which we could not obtain by common reflection and rational exertion; and though we undoubtedly were so influenced on many occasions; yet, being human—being men of like passions with our fellow men, we sometimes spake the language of infirmity. Neither perhaps was it in our power, I mean within our inspired ability, precisely to distinguish when we were under strictly divine infallible influence, and when we were not. It was sufficient for our character, as servants, as instruments of heaven, that our heavenly Father knew; and

and that his power was sufficient to secure every purpose of his own providence, through us !

MARTYR.

These truths are equally worthy of thy exalted state since out of the body, and satisfactory to one who was a sufferer by the malice of misguided zeal ; for though I am abundantly satisfied, independant of this communication, that the consequences of apostolick doctrines were, in some instances, such as the apostles would themselves have been astonished and afflicted at, could they have foreseen them,—yet is it exceedingly delightful to me to converse with one of *them*, in a state, wherein their wisdom is enlarged and perfected ! The trouble and pains of such sufferings as mine, were grievous on earth, for a moment ; but when we feel the immense counterbalance of all suffering, which now attends us, we have no longer, on our own account, any cause of regret, that our path was once thorny and afflictive. Neither can I, as a late martyr, attribute my earthly sufferings so much to any necessary consequence of apostolical imperfection in doctrine,

trine, as to the general perverseness of human nature, which persecuted the apostles themselves, and inflicted *their* share of those sufferings which the Lord JESUS bore!

APOSTLE.

The sufferings of the Lord JESUS were indeed a most inconceivable proof, of the perverseness and depravity of that world! That a character perfectly divine and merciful, breathing nothing but benevolence, and the essence of celestial love, should be liable to calumny and persecution, from beings incapable of any happiness but through him, is a subject that might well affect the heavenly angels themselves! No wonder, then, if *his* oracles were perverted and blasphemed, and himself treated as a malefactor, that the purest of *our* precepts should be perverted! No wonder, that our disproportionate wisdom and labours should be ineffectual to an holy reformation! But GOD, only powerful and infinitely gracious, can change the malignity of a mortal will, and, when He shall please, turn the hearts of infinite ages of transgressors, to the acknowledgment of himself, and make an *universal* heaven!

This

This is a possibility which fills my contemplations with a fervent delight. This is the theme which I conclude is connected with glory, in the highest celestial regions!

MARTYR.

Undoubtedly so; and of which I rejoice in the consciousness of some conception!

APOSTLE.

But not to aspire to the hidden, celestial councils: let us advert, again, to the remaining imperfection of inferior existences—for, from the yet remaining valley of the shadow of death, must a part of *such* a general redemption be; and the lowest salvable state of intelligence is under the supreme notice; therefore not too low for us to be concerned for. I observed in thy account of thy situation on the earth, that thou declaredst thyself to have been a *protestant* martyr: pray what am I to understand by *protestant*?

MARTYR.

The name of protestant was first given to a few professors of the christian religion in the
German

German territories, who *protested* against arbitrary power, in the religious decrees of some princes of the Romish Church. (This happened about half an age before I left the world.) And after that event, those who testified against the Romish Church, were ranked under the general name of *protestants*.

APOSTLE.

I learn, then, from thy account, that Rome gave name to a principal christian church?

MARTYR.

Yes, it was so; but though she gained much distinction, and maintained it for a succession of ages, sometimes being more, and sometimes less celebrated for her antiquity, and the magnificence of her establishment; she came at length to be loudly complained of by a multitude of christians, as a church that had gradually become the creature of power, luxury, and intolerance; a church that spread herself under the pretended banners of apostolical authority; dating her priesthood, in a direct line from St. *Peter*, whom she affected to consider

sider as her tutelar angel, and keeper of the keys of heaven.

APOSTLE.

What, my brother *Peter*, my fellow-labourer in the gospel, a keeper of the keys of heaven! Was it possible that such a power should be assigned to him; and a large body of christian professors, for a succession of ages, believe him to be vested with such an office? I may well fear, then, that if *I* obtained among after-ages no such imaginary dignity, yet that some of my doctrines were strangely misunderstood, if not wrested to unhappy purposes!

MARTYR.

That, indeed, seems to have been the case in some particular instances, especially with regard to church authority; and I know not whether more stress was not laid on some of thy expressions, to the corruption of christian simplicity and meekness, than on all the documents of the other apostles put together. There was, if I rightly remember, a passage in the conclusion of the last book contained in
the

the canon of scripture, intituled Revelations of John the Divine, which exceeded most others in positiveness; but though the language was bold and threatening, it seems to have had no remarkable effect in the instigation of human malignity. The passage I allude to is this:—
 “I testify unto every man that heareth the
 “ words of the prophecy of this book, if any
 “ man shall add unto these things, God shall
 “ add unto him the plagues that are written in
 “ this book. And if any man shall take away
 “ from the words of the book of this prophecy,
 “ God shall take his part out of the book of
 “ life, and out of the holy city, &c.”

APOSTLE.

I do not remember the writing alluded to, and perhaps I never saw it. Was it on subjects of practical virtue, and respecting points of rational consideration? (But I should, indeed, rather suppose otherwise, from its title.)

MARTYR.

No:—that is not characteristick of the book of Revelations. It is highly figurative, visionary,

visionary, and prophetic; and contains many things, which, as *Peter* once said of *thy* writings, are "hard to be understood!" But undoubtedly it contains much grandeur of description, and beauty of language.

APOSTLE.

I knew well the character of *John*; he was a meek and lowly disciple, and a peculiar favorite of his heavenly master; and I believe he would have been one of the last of men to set down any thing with intentional arrogance: but the character thou givest of the writing itself, may be considered, perhaps, as a true reason, why the writer used those positive expressions which thou hast quoted. That which is not adapted for human comprehension *may*, indeed, be madness; but it may be superior wisdom, and heavenly illumination. A wise man, on earth, will not suppose the former, while the latter may be true; and while concurring circumstances of the sanctity and wisdom of the author render it probable. The happiness which our Heavenly Father intends to result, from the *religion* of his probationary creatures, must ever be lessened in proportion

as

as they set Revelation at naught, and adhere to the rational suggestions of their own minds; minds which are so strongly prone to favour the gratification of the senses, whether in impurity of desire, in luxury, in covetousness, in ambition, or revenge. And yet, would men be sufficiently serious in their attention, they would find, that there is abundant room to exercise the rules which I once was inspired to lay down among them: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "What-ever is not of faith, is sin." I say *inspired*; because, though the words themselves are not remarkable for sublimity, or any thing strongly characteristick of Heaven, yet have they an heavenly soundness of doctrine; and I remember the fervent conviction with which I uttered them. Happier might it have been for the succeeding church, had my precepts of belief been always confined to such a simplicity of language, and had I been less positive in some of my expressions, wherein I alluded to the strict uniformity of the divine will, and the penalty annexed to some kinds of deviation from uniformity in the church; some particular words of mine, which thy repetition of

John's

John's expressions now bring to my remembrance, often recurred to my mind, when it was too late to recall them: perhaps thou rememberest them: I think they were written to the Galatian Church.*

“ But though we, or an angel from heaven,
“ preach any other gospel unto you than that
“ which we have preached unto you, let him
“ be *accursed*.—As we said before, so say I now
“ again, if any man preach any other gospel
“ unto you than that ye have received, let him
“ be *accursed* !” My views were to prevent
schisms in the church, and to fix the minds of
men to those principles which I believed to be
divine and eternal; but I am now convinced
that there was a fervor of zeal expressed, which,
even in such a character as mine, was not the
most calculated to produce the heavenly amity,
proposed by the gospel.

MARTYR.

I remember that passage well; and though I
revered thy character, and felt the animating

* See Gal. i. 8, 9.

divine force of many of thy positive precepts, I could not think on those words without some degree of regret, that they should have been transmitted to posterity. From the evidence, among men, which resulted from history, and from reasons which were plainly deducible from human nature, and the operations of divine grace, it seemed clear, that the best effects were produced on earth by expressions of love, and tender sollicitation. A harshness of language, in a teacher of that religion that was only designed to humble the rational mind, soften the human heart, and refine the affections, was liable to misconstruction and resistance, in proportion to its harshness.

But there was another passage, either truly or injuriously attributed to thee, that seems to have had a much more fatal effect in the church, which was this to the Corinthians: "Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Some commentators on the text used to construe it in a comparatively innocent sense, as only meaning excommunication from the church, to give
over

over the offender to his inward enemy, or leave him to his own unhappy reflections; that through the misery of that kind of rejection, he may the sooner desire to be reformed, and so perhaps be the sooner fitted for the day of judgment. Others have thought that the incestuous Corinthian, who was the object of that particular censure, was so gross an offender, as to warrant that particular consignment to misery. But too many readers seemed to understand it as a *general* licence to the heads of churches, or those possessing power, to inflict corporal punishment. And the church of Rome, which I before mentioned, made a dreadful use of the sanction, which her priests, the pretended infallible successors of St. *Peter*, inferred, as held forth in such a precedaneous exhortation. So great was the intolerance and cruelty of that church, which stiled herself the Mother, and the Catholick Church, that she often, in the most fatal sense of the words, delivered over mankind to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. To enumerate the persecutions which she inflicted, under the profession of *punishing the body for the good of the soul*, were an endless repetition of horror. Such was the

spirit of that slaughter, in which I lost my earthly existence; and I have been informed that more than seventy thousand human beings were then put to death, within a small district. Such was the result of erroneous opinions of authority, far, as thou wast, from designing to inculcate them!

APOSTLE.

Far, indeed, I was! My zeal for the spreading of a religion which I thought so much connected with the duty and good of mankind, was great; and had power of compulsion and punishment, in my days, been on the side of the christian churches, I have since thought it would have been a temptation, even to the inspired ministers of heaven. But we were not tried: how it may have been permitted afterwards, our successors better knew.

MARTYR.

Among the many accounts that stood recorded in the world, in my days, of the fluctuations and convulsions of religion, we were not without satisfactory proof, that power and
persecution

persecution were too generally companions; nor is it to be expected that a world, which has ever been in disorder, will universally be reformed, but by the authoritative miraculous interposition of that glorious Being, who has all power in his hands! But as universal love, and universal simplicity of devotion, are within the Fiat of our most wise and merciful Father; we are privileged to hope, at least, that this our heavenly society will be ultimately joined, by all beings, that are capable of receiving refinement from an infinite influence! Such are the sentiments on which I dwell with delight, when I contemplate the possibilities of heavenly goodness beyond my own particular enjoyment of this felicity! To the source eternal of all felicity, and of all glory, be ascribed thanksgiving and praise!

APOSTLE.

Such is the proper theme of heaven; of all happy gradations of created existences—up to the nearest resemblance of the nature of GOD himself! The earnest of that felicity which we received under the perils of the mortal body, as the reward of our faithfulness, however imperfect,

perfect, was glorious! But the "eternal weight of glory," that is *now* revealed; and which, according to the attributes of the holy One, may ever be revealed and augmented, shall not only compensate for our necessary remembrance of imperfection; but give us some part in the intercession of JESUS, for all the children of disobedience!—for all them who shall "hereafter believe on him, to life everlasting!"

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise GOD, the blessed and only potentate,—who only hath immortality dwelling in the light,—be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

THE END.

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